HANDS AROUND

"REIGEN"

ACTRESS AND THE COUNT

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ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

HANDS AROUND

* A ROUNDELAY IN TEN DIALOGUES *

Translated by KEENE WALLIS & *Illustrated by* RENE GOCKINGA

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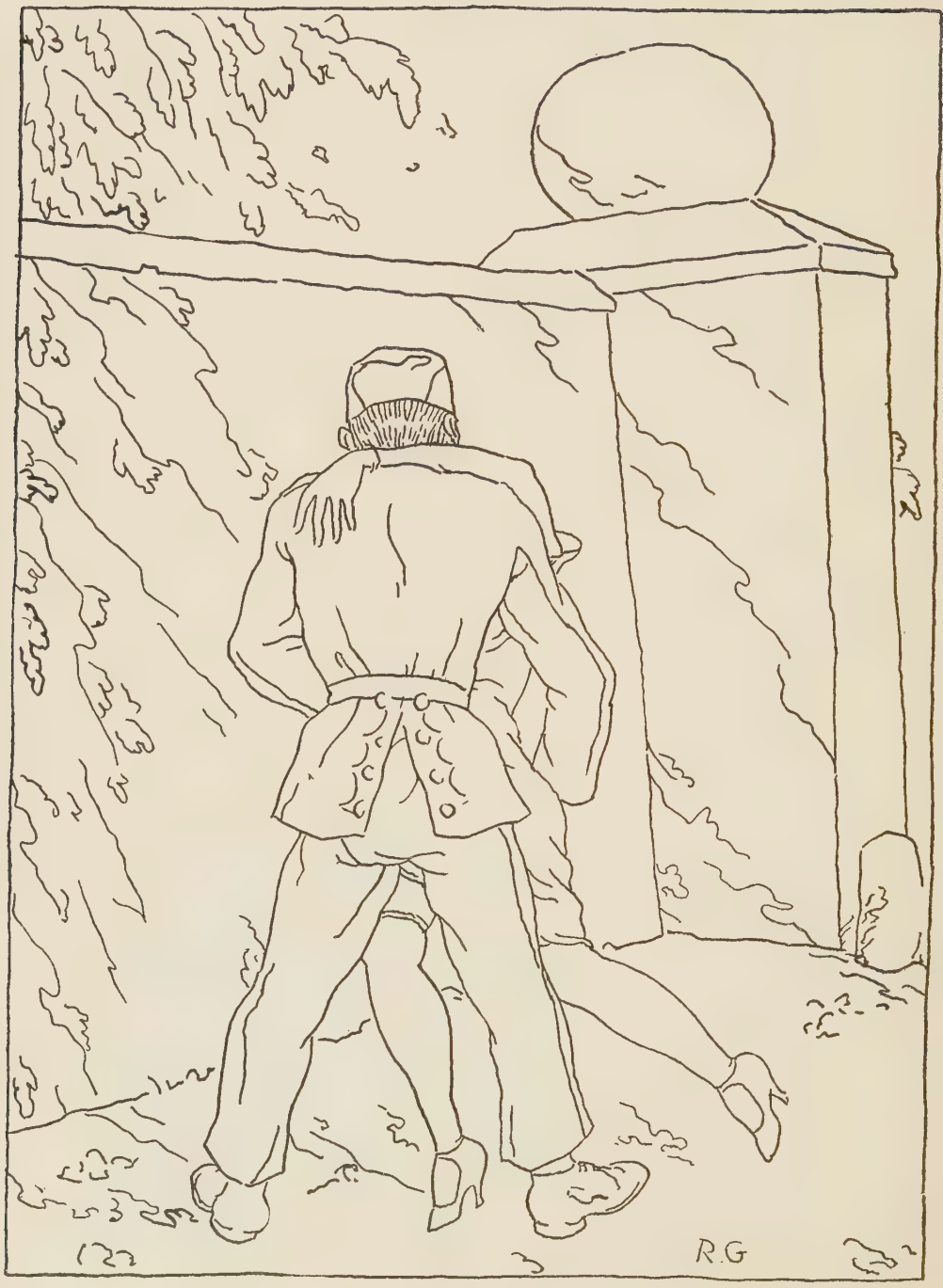
HOUSEMAID
COUNT
SOLDIER
SWEET THING
YOUNG MAN
ACTRESS
YOUNG WIFE
STREETWALKER
HUSBAND
POET

STREETWALKER AND THE SOLDIER


R.G

STREETWALKER AND THE SOLDIER

Late evening on the Augarten Bridge.

SOLDIER — Whistling, on his way home.

STREETWALKER — Hello, good lookin'!

SOLDIER — Turns and goes on.

STREETWALKER — What's your hurry?

SOLDIER — Me, good-lookin'?

STREETWALKER — Sure, who do you think? Say, come on. My place is right around the corner.

SOLDIER — Haven't got time. I got to get back to the barracks.

STREETWALKER — You've got plenty of time to get back to your barracks.

SOLDIER — Close to her. Yeah?

STREETWALKER — Ps-st! Look out for the cops.

SOLDIER — Cops! Say, I've got a night stick, myself.

STREETWALKER — Come on.

SOLDIER — Let me alone. I'm broke anyway.

STREETWALKER — I don't want your money.

SOLDIER — Stopping. They are under a street-lamp. You don't want money? What kind of a dame are you?

STREETWALKER — I won't take a soldier-boy's pay from him. Of course, if you wasn't a soldier. . . .

SOLDIER — Maybe you're the girl my pal told me about.

STREETWALKER — I don't know any pal of yours.

SOLDIER — You're the one, all right! You know—the café down the street. He went home with you.

STREETWALKER — I've taken lots of 'em home with me from that place . . . lots of 'em!

SOLDIER — All right. Let's go!

STREETWALKER — In a hurry now, huh?

SOLDIER — Well, what are you waiting for? Say, gal, I've got to be back at the barracks by ten.

STREETWALKER — Been in the service long?

SOLDIER — What do you care how long I've been in? Is it far?

STREETWALKER — Make it in ten minutes.

SOLDIER — Too far for me. Give's a kiss.

STREETWALKER — Kissing him. That's what I like best—when I love 'em.

SOLDIER — I don't. No. Can't go with you. It's too far.

STREETWALKER — Say, how about to-morrow afternoon?

SOLDIER — Great. Let's have your address.

STREETWALKER — But maybe you won't come.

SOLDIER — Me! I will, if I say I will.

STREETWALKER — Look here—if my place is too far—over there . . . to-night. She points toward the Danube.

SOLDIER — What's there?

STREETWALKER — It's nice and quiet there . . . no one around.

SOLDIER — Say, that's no good.

STREETWALKER — It's always good with me. Come on. Who knows? We may be dead to-morrow.

SOLDIER — All right, let's go—but make it snappy.

STREETWALKER — Oh, it's so dark. Look out! you'll fall in the river.

SOLDIER — Good thing if I did, I guess.

STREETWALKER Sh-h. Wait, we're coming to a bench.

SOLDIER You seem to know all about this place.

STREETWALKER I'd like to have a guy like you for a sweetheart.

SOLDIER I'd make you jealous all the time.

STREETWALKER I'll fix that, all right.

SOLDIER Is zat so?

STREETWALKER Don't make such a racket. There's cops around. We're right in the middle of Vienna.

SOLDIER Come on. Come over here.

STREETWALKER Crazy! We'll fall in the river.

SOLDIER Has grabbed her. Oh you—

STREETWALKER Hold me tight.

SOLDIER Don't be afraid . . .

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STREETWALKER Would'av been nicer on the bench.

SOLDIER It's all the same to me. . . . Well, get up.

STREETWALKER What's your hurry—?

SOLDIER — Got to get to the barracks. I'm late already.

STREETWALKER — Say, what's your name?

SOLDIER — What do you care what's my name?

STREETWALKER — My name is Leocadia.

SOLDIER — What a name!

STREETWALKER — Say!

SOLDIER — Well, what do you want?

STREETWALKER — Give's two-bits for the janitor.

SOLDIER — Humph! . . . What do you think I am? A meal-ticket? Good-by, Leocadia . . .

STREETWALKER — Cheap-skate! Pimp! He disappears.

CURTAIN

SOLDIER AND THE HOUSEMAID

R.G.

SOLDIER AND THE HOUSEMAID

Prater Gardens. Sunday Evening. A path leading away from the amusement park. Trees. Darkness. The wild medley from the amusement park can still be heard; also strains of music from the cheap dance-hall, a vulgar polka, played by a brass band. The Soldier. The Housemaid.

HOUSEMAID — Now tell me why you wanted to leave.

SOLDIER — Grins sheepishly.

HOUSEMAID — It was so nice, and I love to dance.

SOLDIER — Puts his arm around her waist.

HOUSEMAID — Submitting. But we aren't dancing. Why do you hold me so tight?

SOLDIER — What's your name? Katy?

HOUSEMAID — You've got a "Katy" on your brain.

SOLDIER — I know—I know . . . Marie.

HOUSEMAID — Goodness, it's dark here. I'm afraid.

SOLDIER — You needn't be afraid when I'm with you. Jeeziz, I'm glad we're alone.

HOUSEMAID — But where are we going? And nobody around. Come, let's go back! . . . It's so dark!

SOLDIER — Pulling at his cigar until it glows brightly. There . . . it's lighter already. Ha—ha! Oh, you sweet thing!

HOUSEMAID — Oh! what are you doing? If I had thought this was what you—

SOLDIER — I'll be a son-of-a-gun if there was any one who felt softer and rounder than you, Miss Marie.

HOUSEMAID — How do you know? Were you feeling them all up?

SOLDIER — A guy notices things dancing. Lots of things!

HOUSEMAID — But you danced with that sour-faced blonde a lot more than you did with me.

SOLDIER — She's an old friend of my pal's.

HOUSEMAID — That corporal with the Kaiser Wilhelm mustache?

SOLDIER — No, I mean the civilian. You know, the one who was talking with me at the table before we started dancing. The one who talks so hoarse.

HOUSEMAID — Oh I know. He's pretty fresh.

SOLDIER — Did he do anything to you? I'll show him! What did he do to you?

HOUSEMAID — Oh nothing . . . I noticed how he acted with the others.

SOLDIER — Say, Miss Marie . . .

HOUSEMAID — You'll burn me with your cigar.

SOLDIER — Pardon me!—Miss Marie—or may I say Marie?

HOUSEMAID — We're not such good friends yet . . .

SOLDIER — Lots of people that don't like each other don't say Mister or Miss.

HOUSEMAID — Next time, if we . . . But, Frank!

SOLDIER — Oh, you got my name?

HOUSEMAID — But Frank . . .

SOLDIER — That's right, call me Frank, Miss Marie.

HOUSEMAID — Don't get fresh—but, sh-h, suppose some one should come!

SOLDIER — What if they did? They couldn't see anything a foot away.

HOUSEMAID — For goodness' sake, where are we going?

SOLDIER — Look! There's two just like us.

HOUSEMAID — Where? I can't see anything.

SOLDIER — There . . . just ahead.

HOUSEMAID — Why do you say: "two like us"?

SOLDIER — Well, I mean, they like each other too.

HOUSEMAID — Look out! What's that there? I nearly fell.

SOLDIER — Oh, that's the gate. There's a meadow on the other side.

HOUSEMAID — Don't shove me. I'll fall.

SOLDIER — Sh-h, not so loud.

HOUSEMAID — Stop! I'm going to scream—What are you doing? . . . Stop.

SOLDIER — There's no one around.

HOUSEMAID — Then, let's go back to the people.

SOLDIER — We don't want people. Why Marie, what we want . . . Ha! ha! ha!

HOUSEMAID — Stop, Frank, please, for Heaven's sake! Listen to me. If I had . . . known . . . oh . . . do—

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SOLDIER Blissfully. Come on, again. . . . Oh. . . .

HOUSEMAID I can't see your face . . .

SOLDIER My face!

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SOLDIER Well, Miss Marie, you can't stay here all night.

HOUSEMAID Please, Frank, help me.

SOLDIER Oh, get up.

HOUSEMAID Oh, my God, Frank!

SOLDIER Well, what do you want?

HOUSEMAID You're a wicked man, Frank.

SOLDIER Uhum. . . . Say, wait a minute.

HOUSEMAID Why do you leave me?

SOLDIER Can't you let me light my cigar?

HOUSEMAID It's so dark.

SOLDIER It'll be light again to-morrow morning.

HOUSEMAID Tell me you love me, anyways.

SOLDIER Well, you must know I do, from the way—

HOUSEMAID — Where are we going now?

SOLDIER — Back, of course.

HOUSEMAID — Please, don't walk so fast.

SOLDIER — Well, what's the matter? I don't like to hang around in the dark.

HOUSEMAID — Tell me, Frank . . . do you love me?

SOLDIER — But I just told you I loved you!

HOUSEMAID — Won't you give me a little kiss?

SOLDIER — Condescendingly. There . . . Listen . . . There's the music again.

HOUSEMAID — Do you really want to go back and dance?

SOLDIER — Sure, why not?

HOUSEMAID — But, Frank, I have to get home. Madame will scold me anyway, she's cranky . . . she'd rather I never went out at all.

SOLDIER — You can go home.

HOUSEMAID — But I thought you'd take me home.

SOLDIER — Take you home? eh!

HOUSEMAID — Please, it's kind of lonely to go home alone.

SOLDIER — Where do you live?

HOUSEMAID — Not very far—in Porzellanstrasse.

SOLDIER — Sure enough! Then we go the same way . . . but it's too early for me . . . me for the dance . . . I don't have to be back at the barracks before twelve o'clock. I'm going to dance.

HOUSEMAID — Oh, I see, it's that sour-faced blonde's chance, now.

SOLDIER — Humph! Her face isn't so sour.

HOUSEMAID — Oh Lord, how wicked men are. I'm sure you do the same to every one.

SOLDIER — That'd be a big job for one man!

HOUSEMAID — Please, Frank, no more to-night—but don't leave me, you see—

SOLDIER — Oh, very well, all right. But I suppose you'll let me dance.

HOUSEMAID — I'm not going to dance with any one but you.

SOLDIER — There it is . . .

HOUSEMAID — What?

SOLDIER — The hall! How quick we got back. They're playing the same thing . . . that tatata-tum tatata-tum. He hums with the band . . . Well, I'll take you home, if you'll wait for me . . . if not . . . good-by.

HOUSEMAID — Yes, I'll wait. They enter the dancehall.

SOLDIER — Say, Miss Marie, get yourself a glass of beer. Turning to a blonde who is just dancing past him in the arms of another. Very formally. Miss, may I have the next dance?

CURTAIN

HOUSEMAID AND THE YOUNG MAN

R.G.

HOUSEMAID AND THE YOUNG MAN

Sultry summer afternoon. The parents of the Young Man are away in the country. The cook is out. The Housemaid is in the kitchen writing a letter to the soldier who is now her sweetheart. The Young Man's bell rings. She gets up and goes to his room. The Young Man is lying on a couch, smoking a cigarette and reading a French novel.

HOUSEMAID — Sir?

YOUNG MAN — Oh, yes, Marie, yes; I rang, yes . . . I only wanted . . . of course . . . Oh, yes, of course, let the blinds down, Marie . . . It's cooler with the blinds down . . . yes . . .

HOUSEMAID — Goes to the window and pulls down the blinds.

YOUNG MAN — Continues reading. What are you doing, Marie? Oh, yes. But now I can't read.

HOUSEMAID — You always study so hard, Sir.

YOUNG MAN — Ignoring the remark. There, that's better.

HOUSEMAID — Goes out.

YOUNG MAN — Tries to go on with his reading, lets the book fall, and rings again.

HOUSEMAID — Enters.

YOUNG MAN — I say, Marie . . . let's see, what was it I wanted to say? Oh, yes . . . Is there any cognac in the house?

HOUSEMAID — Yes, but it's locked up.

YOUNG MAN — Who has the key?

HOUSEMAID — Lena.

YOUNG MAN — Who is Lena?

HOUSEMAID — The cook, Mr. Alfred.

YOUNG MAN — Ask Lena for it.

HOUSEMAID — Sure, but it's Lena's day out.

YOUNG MAN — Oh . . .

HOUSEMAID — Can't I get anything for you from the café, Sir?

YOUNG MAN — Thank you, no . . . It's hot enough as it is. I don't need any cognac. Listen, Marie, bring me a glass of water. Wait, Marie—let it run, till it gets quite cold.

Exit Housemaid. The Young Man gazes after her. At the door the maid looks back at him, and the Young Man glances into the air. She arranges her curls before the mirror. Then she brings the glass of water to the Young Man. The Young Man raises himself a bit, leaning on his elbow. The Housemaid gives him the glass of water and their fingers touch.

YOUNG MAN — Thank you—Why what is the matter?—Careful. Put the glass back on the tray. He leans back, and stretches himself. What time is it?

HOUSEMAID — Five o'clock, Sir.

YOUNG MAN — Ah, five o'clock. That's fine.

HOUSEMAID — Goes. At the door she turns around. The Young Man has followed her with his eyes; she notices it, and smiles.

YOUNG MAN — Remains stretched out awhile; then, suddenly, he gets up. He walks to the door, back again, and lies down on the couch. He again tries to read. After a few moments, he rings once more.

HOUSEMAID — Appears with a smile which she does not try to hide.

YOUNG MAN — Listen, Marie, there was something I wanted to ask you. Didn't Dr. Schueller call this morning?

HOUSEMAID — No, Sir. Nobody called.

YOUNG MAN — That is strange. So Dr. Schueller didn't call? Do you know Dr. Schueller by sight?

HOUSEMAID — Of course. He's the big gentleman with the black beard.

YOUNG MAN — Yes. Perhaps he called after all?

HOUSEMAID — No, Sir. Nobody called.

YOUNG MAN — Resolutely. Come here, Marie.

HOUSEMAID — Coming a little nearer. Yes, Sir.

YOUNG MAN — Closer . . . so . . . ah . . . I only thought . . .

HOUSEMAID — Do you want anything, Sir?

YOUNG MAN — I thought. . . . Well, I thought—only about your blouse. What kind of a blouse is it? Can't you come closer? I won't bite you.

HOUSEMAID — Comes close to him. What is the matter with my blouse? Don't you like it, Sir?

YOUNG MAN — Takes hold of her blouse, and draws her down to him. Blue? It is a nice blue. Simply. You are prettily dressed, Marie.

HOUSEMAID — But, Sir . . .

YOUNG MAN — Ah. . . . What is the matter? . . . He has opened her blouse. In a matter of fact tone. You have a beautiful white skin, Marie.

HOUSEMAID — You flatter me, Sir.

YOUNG MAN — Kissing her on the breast. That won't hurt you.

HOUSEMAID — Oh, no.

YOUNG MAN — But you sigh. Why are you sighing?

HOUSEMAID — Oh, Mr. Alfred . . .

YOUNG MAN — And what charming little slippers you have . . .

HOUSEMAID — But . . . Sir . . . if the doorbell should ring.

YOUNG MAN — Who would ring now?

HOUSEMAID — But, Sir . . . look . . . it is so light . . .

YOUNG MAN — You needn't feel shy with me. You needn't feel shy with anybody . . . a girl as pretty as you. Yes, really, you are, Marie . . . Do you know your hair smells sweet?

HOUSEMAID — Mr. Alfred . . .

YOUNG MAN — Don't make such a fuss, Marie . . . Anyway, I've already seen you different. When I came home the other night and went to get some water, the door to your room was open . . . and . . .

HOUSEMAID — Covering her face. Oh, my, I didn't think that Mr. Alfred could be so wicked.

YOUNG MAN — I saw lots then . . . that . . . and that . . . that . . . and—

HOUSEMAID — Oh, Mr. Alfred!

YOUNG MAN — Come, come . . . here . . . yes, like that . . .

HOUSEMAID — But if the doorbell should ring now—

YOUNG MAN — Forget it . . . We simply wouldn't open the door.

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YOUNG MAN — The bell rings. Damn it . . . What a racket that man makes—Perhaps he rang before, and we didn't hear.

HOUSEMAID — Oh, no. I was listening all the time.

YOUNG MAN — Well, see what's the matter. Peek through the curtains.

HOUSEMAID — Mr. Alfred . . . you are . . . No . . . you're such a bad man.

YOUNG MAN — Please go and see . . .

HOUSEMAID — Goes.

YOUNG MAN — Quickly puts up the blinds.

HOUSEMAID — Returns. He must have gone away. Anyway, no one is there now. Maybe it was Dr. Schueller.

YOUNG MAN — Annoyed. Thank you.

HOUSEMAID — Drawing close to him.

YOUNG MAN — Evading her. Listen, Marie—I'm going to the café now.

HOUSEMAID — Tenderly. So soon . . . Mr. Alfred?

YOUNG MAN — Formally. I am going to the café now . . . If Dr. Schueller should call—

HOUSEMAID — He won't come any more to-day.

YOUNG MAN — Severely. If Dr. Schueller should come, I am in the café, you understand.

He goes to the adjoining room. The Maid takes a cigar from the smoking-stand, puts it in her blouse and goes out.

CURTAIN

YOUNG MAN AND THE YOUNG WIFE

YOUNG MAN AND THE YOUNG WIFE

Evening—A drawing-room furnished with cheap elegance in a house in Schwind Street. The Young Man has just come in and still has his hat and overcoat on. He lights the gas. Then he opens a door to a side-room and looks in. The light from the drawing-room shines across the inlaid floor as far as the Louis Quinze bed, which stands against the opposite wall. A reddish light plays from the fire-place in the corner of the bedroom upon the hangings of the bed. The Young Man now inspects the bedroom. He takes an atomizer from the dressing-table, and sprays the bed-pillows with essence of violet. Then he goes with the atomizer through both rooms, constantly pressing upon the bulb, so that soon the scent pervades the apartment. He then takes off his hat and coat. He sits down in a blue velvet armchair, lights a cigarette, and smokes. After a short pause he rises again, and makes sure that the green shutters are closed. Suddenly, he goes into the bedroom, and opens a drawer in the dressing-table. He feels around in the drawer and finds a tortoise-shell hair-pin. He looks for a place to hide it, and finally puts it into a pocket of his overcoat. He opens the buffet in the drawing-room; takes a silver tray, with a bottle and two liqueur glasses, and puts them on the table. He goes back to his overcoat, and takes from it a small white package. Opening this, he places it beside the cognac. He goes to the buffet again and takes two small plates and knives and forks. He takes a marron glacé from the package and eats it. Then he pours himself a glass of cognac, and drinks it quickly. He then looks at his watch. He walks up and down the room. He stops a while before a large mirror, combing his hair and tiny mustache with a pocket-comb. He next goes to the door of the vestibule and listens. Nothing there. Then he pulls together the blue portieres, which hang in front of the bedroom. The bell rings. He starts slightly. Then he sits down in the armchair, and does not rise until the door has been opened and the Young Wife enters.

YOUNG WIFE — Heavily veiled, closes the door behind her, pausing a moment with her left hand over her heart, as though mastering a strong emotion.

YOUNG MAN — Goes toward her, takes her left hand, and presses a kiss on the white glove. Softly. **Thank you.**

YOUNG WIFE — Alfred—Alfred!

YOUNG MAN — Come, Madame . . . Come, Emma . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Let me alone for a minute—please . . . Oh, please, please, Alfred! She is still standing at the door.

YOUNG MAN — Standing before her, holding her hand

YOUNG WIFE — Where am I, really?

YOUNG MAN — With me.

YOUNG WIFE — This place is terrible, Alfred.

YOUNG MAN — Why? It is a very proper house.

YOUNG WIFE — But I met two gentlemen on the stairs.

YOUNG MAN — Acquaintances of yours?

YOUNG WIFE — I don't know. They might be.

YOUNG MAN — But, Madame—You surely know your friends!

YOUNG WIFE — I couldn't see their faces.

YOUNG MAN — But even if they were your best friends—they couldn't possibly recognize you . . . I, myself . . . if I didn't know it was you . . . this veil—

YOUNG WIFE — I am wearing two veils.

YOUNG MAN — Won't you come in? . . . And at least take off your hat?

YOUNG WIFE — What are you thinking of, Alfred? I promised five minutes . . . Not an instant more . . . I swear, no more—

YOUNG MAN — Well, your veil—

YOUNG WIFE — There are two of them.

YOUNG MAN — All right, both . . . you will at least let me see your face.

YOUNG WIFE — Do you really love me, Alfred?

YOUNG MAN — Deeply hurt. Emma! Can you ask?

YOUNG WIFE — It's so warm here.

YOUNG MAN — You've still got your coat on. Really, you will catch cold.

YOUNG WIFE — Finally enters the room, and throws herself into the armchair. I'm tired, so tired.

YOUNG MAN — Permit me. He takes off her veil, removes her hatpin, and puts hat, pin and veil aside.

YOUNG WIFE — Permits.

YOUNG MAN — Stands before her, shaking his head.

YOUNG WIFE — Why, what's the matter?

YOUNG MAN — You've never been so beautiful.

YOUNG WIFE — How is that?

YOUNG MAN — Alone . . . alone with you, Emma! He kneels beside her chair, takes both her hands and covers them with kisses.

YOUNG WIFE — And now . . . now let me go. I have done what you asked me.

YOUNG MAN — Lets his head sink into her lap.

YOUNG WIFE — You promised to be good.

YOUNG MAN — Yes.

YOUNG WIFE — It is stifling in this room.

YOUNG MAN — Gets up. You still have your coat on.

YOUNG WIFE — Put it with my hat.

YOUNG MAN — Takes off her coat, and puts it on the sofa.

YOUNG WIFE — And now . . . good-by—

YOUNG MAN — Emma! Emma!

YOUNG WIFE — The five minutes were up long, long ago.

YOUNG MAN — It isn't a minute!

YOUNG WIFE — Alfred, tell me truly now, what time is it?

YOUNG MAN — It is exactly a quarter past six.

YOUNG WIFE — I should have been at my sister's long ago.

YOUNG MAN — You can see your sister any time . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Oh, good God, Alfred, why did you lure me here?

YOUNG MAN — Because . . . I adore you, Emma!

YOUNG WIFE — How many women have you said that to?

YOUNG MAN — Not one, since I met you.

YOUNG WIFE — What a weak woman I am! If anybody had predicted . . . a week ago . . . or even yesterday . . .

YOUNG MAN — But you had already promised me day before yesterday.

YOUNG WIFE — You kept after me so. But I didn't want to . . . God is my witness—I didn't want to . . . Yesterday, I was firmly decided . . . Do you know I wrote you a long letter last night?

YOUNG MAN — I didn't receive any.

YOUNG WIFE — I tore it up. Oh, if only I had sent it!

YOUNG MAN — It is better as it is.

YOUNG WIFE — Oh, no, it's awful . . . of me. I don't understand myself. Good-by, Alfred, let me go.

YOUNG MAN — Seizes her, and covers her face with burning kisses.

YOUNG WIFE — So. . . . is that the way you keep your promise?

YOUNG MAN — One more kiss . . . just one more.

YOUNG WIFE — The last. He kisses her, and she returns the kiss; their lips remain joined for a long time.

YOUNG MAN — Shall I tell you something, Emma? Now for the first time I know what happiness is.

YOUNG WIFE — Sinks back into the armchair.

YOUNG MAN — Sits on the arm of the chair, and puts one arm lightly about her neck. Rather, I know now what happiness might be.

YOUNG WIFE — Sighs deeply.

YOUNG MAN — Kisses her again.

YOUNG WIFE — Alfred, Alfred, what are you doing!

YOUNG MAN — Wasn't I right? It isn't so awfully uncomfortable here. And we are safe here. It's a thousand times better than those meetings in public.

YOUNG WIFE — Oh, don't remind me of them.

YOUNG MAN — I shall always recall them with a thousand delights. Every minute you let me spend with you is a sweet memory.

YOUNG WIFE — Do you remember the ball at the Manufacturers' Club?

YOUNG MAN — Do I remember it? . . . I sat beside you through the whole supper . . . close to you. Your husband had champagne . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Looks at him with a hurt expression.

YOUNG MAN — Oh, I just meant to speak of the champagne. Emma, would you like a glass of cognac?

YOUNG WIFE — Only a drop, but first give me a glass of water.

YOUNG MAN — Surely . . . But where is . . . oh, yes. I remember . . . He opens the portieres, and goes into the bedroom.

YOUNG WIFE Follows him with her eyes.

YOUNG MAN Comes back with a decanter and two glasses.

YOUNG WIFE Where have you been?

YOUNG MAN In the . . . next room. Pours her a glass of water.

YOUNG WIFE Now I'm going to ask you something, Alfred, and you must swear you will tell me the truth.

YOUNG MAN I swear—

YOUNG WIFE Has there ever been any other woman in these rooms?

YOUNG MAN But, Emma, this house was built twenty years ago!

YOUNG WIFE You know what I mean, Alfred . . . in these rooms, with you!

YOUNG MAN With me . . . here . . . Emma! It's mean of you even to imagine such a thing.

YOUNG WIFE Then there was . . . how shall I . . . But, no, I'd rather not ask. It is better that I shouldn't ask. It's my own fault. And I must suffer for it.

YOUNG MAN But what is wrong? How are you suffering? Why?

YOUNG WIFE No, no, no, I mustn't let myself think . . . If I did I should sink through the floor for shame.

YOUNG MAN — With the decanter in his hand. Shakes his head sadly. Emma, if you only knew how you hurt me.

YOUNG WIFE — Pours a glass of cognac.

YOUNG MAN — I want to tell you something, Emma. If you're ashamed, if you don't care for me, if you don't feel you are all the happiness in the world for me, then you'd better go.

YOUNG WIFE — Yes, I will go.

YOUNG MAN — Taking hold of her hand. But if you feel that I cannot live without you, that a kiss upon your hand means more to me than all the caresses of all the women in the whole world . . . Emma, I'm not like other young men, who are experienced in love-making . . . perhaps, I am too naif . . . I . . .

YOUNG WIFE — But suppose you were like other young men?

YOUNG MAN — Then you wouldn't be here to-night . . . because you are not like other women.

YOUNG WIFE — How do you know that?

YOUNG MAN — Drawing her close beside him on the sofa. I have thought a lot about you. I know you are unhappy.

YOUNG WIFE — Pleased. Yes.

YOUNG MAN — Life is so dreary, so empty, so futile, and so short, so frightfully short! There is only one happiness, to find some one who loves you.

YOUNG WIFE — Takes a candied pear from the table, and puts it into her mouth.

YOUNG MAN — Give me half of it! She offers it to him with her lips.

YOUNG WIFE — Catches the Young Man's hands as they threaten to stray. What are you doing, Alfred? . . . Is this the way you keep your promise?

YOUNG MAN — Swallows the pear, then, more daringly. Life is so short.

YOUNG WIFE — Weakly. But that's no reason—

YOUNG MAN — Mechanically. Oh, yes.

YOUNG WIFE — Still more weakly. Alfred, you promised to be good . . . and it's so light . . .

YOUNG MAN — Come, come, you only, only. . . . He lifts her from the sofa.

YOUNG WIFE — What are you doing?

YOUNG MAN — It isn't light in the other room.

YOUNG WIFE — Is there another room?

YOUNG MAN — Drawing her with him. A beautiful one . . . and quite dark.

YOUNG WIFE — We'd better stay here.

YOUNG MAN — Already past the bedroom portieres with her, loosening her waist.

YOUNG WIFE — You are so . . . O merciful Heaven, what are you doing to me? Alfred!

YOUNG MAN — I adore you, Emma!

YOUNG WIFE — So then wait, wait a little . . . Weakly. Go . . . I'll call you.

YOUNG MAN — Let you help me . . . let help. Confused. Let . . . me help you.

YOUNG WIFE — You'll tear everything.

YOUNG MAN — You have no corset on?

YOUNG WIFE — I never wear a corset. Stylish women in Paris aren't wearing any either. But you may unbutton my shoes.

YOUNG MAN — Unbuttons her shoes and kisses her feet.

YOUNG WIFE — Slips into bed. Oh, how cold it is.

YOUNG MAN — It'll be warm in a minute.

YOUNG WIFE — Laughing softly. Do you think so?

YOUNG MAN — Slightly hurt, to himself. She ought not to have said that. He undresses in the dark.

YOUNG WIFE — Tenderly. Come, quick, come!

YOUNG MAN — Mollified. Just a minute, dear—

YOUNG WIFE — It smells like violets here.

YOUNG MAN — That's you . . . Yes. To her. You, yourself.

YOUNG WIFE — Alfred . . . Alfred . . .

YOUNG MAN — Emma . . .

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YOUNG MAN — Apparently I love you too much . . . yes . . . I feel as if I was out of my mind.

YOUNG WIFE — . . . . . .

YOUNG MAN — I have been crazy for you all these days. I was afraid of this.

YOUNG WIFE — Don't mind it.

YOUNG MAN — Oh, certainly not. It's perfectly natural, if one . . .

YOUNG WIFE — No . . . don't . . . You are nervous. Calm yourself first.

YOUNG MAN — Do you know Stendhal?

YOUNG WIFE — Stendhal?

YOUNG MAN — The "Psychologie de l'amour."

YOUNG WIFE — No. Why do you ask me?

YOUNG MAN — There's a story in that book which is to the point.

YOUNG WIFE — What kind of a story?

YOUNG MAN — A bunch of cavalry officers get together

YOUNG WIFE — Yes.

YOUNG MAN — And they are telling each other about their love affairs. And each one of them relates that with the woman he loved best . . . most passionately, you know . . . that his, that he . . . well, in short, that the same thing happened that happened to me just now.

YOUNG WIFE — Yes.

YOUNG MAN — That is very natural.

YOUNG WIFE — Yes.

YOUNG MAN — The story is not ended. One of them claimed . . . that this thing had never happened to him, but, adds Stendhal . . . he was a proverbial liar.

YOUNG WIFE — And?

YOUNG MAN — And, yet, it makes a man feel bad . . . that's the stupid part of it, because it really doesn't mean anything.

YOUNG WIFE — Of course not. Anyway, you know . . . you promised to be good.

YOUNG MAN — Oh! Don't make fun of me. That doesn't help a bit.

YOUNG WIFE — But, I'm not. That story of Stendhal's is really interesting. I have always thought that only older people or people who . . . you know, people who have been pretty fast.

YOUNG MAN — The idea! That has nothing to do with it. By the way, I had completely forgotten the best of Stendhal's stories. One of the officers went so far as to say that he stayed for three or even six nights . . . I don't remember now—that is he stayed with a woman he had wanted for weeks—*désirée*—you understand, and nothing happened all those nights except that they wept for happiness . . . both . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Both?

YOUNG MAN — Yes. Does that surprise you? I can understand it very well . . . especially when two people love each other.

YOUNG WIFE — But surely there are a good many who don't weep.

YOUNG MAN — Nervously. Certainly . . . this is an exceptional case.

YOUNG WIFE — Oh, I thought Stendhal said that all cavalry officers weep when—

YOUNG MAN — Now you are laughing at me again.

YOUNG WIFE — What an idea! Don't be childish, Alfred.

YOUNG MAN — Well, it makes me nervous anyway . . . Besides I have the feeling that you are thinking about it all the time. That's what really hurts.

YOUNG WIFE — I'm not thinking of it at all.

YOUNG MAN — If I were only sure that you love me.

YOUNG WIFE — Do you want more proofs?

YOUNG MAN — Didn't I tell you . . . you are always laughing at me.

YOUNG WIFE — Why do you think so? Come, let me hold your sweet little head.

YOUNG MAN — Oh, that feels good.

YOUNG WIFE — Do you love me?

YOUNG MAN — Oh, I'm so happy.

YOUNG WIFE — And you needn't cry about it.

YOUNG MAN — Moving away from her, highly irritated. There! Again! I begged you not to . . .

YOUNG WIFE — To tell you that you shouldn't cry . . .

YOUNG MAN — You said: "You needn't cry about it."

YOUNG WIFE — You are nervous, sweetheart.

YOUNG MAN — I know.

YOUNG WIFE — But you ought not to be. I even like our being together like good comrades . . .

YOUNG MAN — Now you are beginning again.

YOUNG WIFE — Don't you remember! That was one of the first things we said to each other. We wanted to be comrades, nothing more. Oh, how nice that was . . . at my sister's ball in January, during the quadrille. . . . For heaven's sake, I should have gone long ago. . . . My sister expects me . . . what shall I tell her. . . Good-by, Alfred—

YOUNG MAN — Emma! Can you leave me this way?

YOUNG WIFE — Yes, I can!

YOUNG MAN — Five minutes more. . . .

YOUNG WIFE — All right. Five minutes more. But you must promise me not to move? . . . Yes? . . . I want to give you a good-by kiss. . . . Psst . . . be still . . . don't move. I told you, otherwise I'll get up at once, my sweetheart, you sweet . . .

YOUNG MAN — Emma . . . my ador . . . . . .

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YOUNG WIFE — My Alfred!

YOUNG MAN — Oh, it is heaven to be with you.

YOUNG WIFE — But now I've really got to go.

YOUNG MAN — Oh, let your sister wait.

YOUNG WIFE — I must go home. It is too late to see my sister. What time is it, anyway?

YOUNG MAN — How should I know?

YOUNG WIFE — You might look at your watch.

YOUNG MAN — My watch is in my vest.

YOUNG WIFE — Get it.

YOUNG MAN — Gets up with a jump. Eight o'clock.

YOUNG WIFE — Jumps up quickly. For heaven's sake. . . . Quick, Alfred, give me my stockings. What shall I say? They must be waiting for me at home . . . eight o'clock. . . .

YOUNG MAN — When shall I see you again?

YOUNG WIFE — Never.

YOUNG MAN — Emma! Don't you love me any more?

YOUNG WIFE — Just because I do. Give me my shoes.

YOUNG MAN — Never again? Here are your shoes.

YOUNG WIFE — My button-hook is in my bag. Please, be quick. . . .

YOUNG MAN — Here is the button-hook.

YOUNG WIFE — Alfred, this may cost us our lives.

YOUNG MAN — Affected very unpleasantly. How?

YOUNG WIFE — What shall I say, if he asks me where I've been?

YOUNG MAN — At your sister's.

YOUNG WIFE — If I could only lie.

YOUNG MAN — You'll have to.

YOUNG WIFE — Everything for a man like you. Oh, come here . . . let me give you a last kiss. And now, leave me to myself, go in the other room. I can't dress with you around.

YOUNG MAN — Goes into the drawing-room, where he dresses. He eats some pastry and drinks a glass of cognac.

YOUNG WIFE — Calls after a while. Alfred!

YOUNG MAN — Yes, sweetheart.

YOUNG WIFE — Isn't it better that we didn't weep?

YOUNG MAN — Smiling, not without pride. How can you talk so flippantly?

YOUNG WIFE — How awful it will be now . . . if we should meet by chance in society?

YOUNG MAN — By chance? . . . Surely you are coming to Lobheimer's to-morrow?

YOUNG WIFE — Yes. You too?

YOUNG MAN — Of course. May I ask for the cotillion?

YOUNG WIFE — Oh, I shall not go. What do you think I am? . . . She enters the drawing-room fully dressed, and takes a chocolate pastry. I'd sink through the floor for shame.

YOUNG MAN — To-morrow at Lobheimer's. That's fine.

YOUNG WIFE — No. no . . . I shall decline . . . certainly decline—

YOUNG MAN — Well, the day after to-morrow . . . here.

YOUNG WIFE — The idea!

YOUNG MAN — At six. . . .

YOUNG WIFE — There are cabs at this corner, aren't there?

YOUNG MAN — Yes, as many as you want. Well, the day after to-morrow, here at six o'clock. Please say "yes," sweetheart.

YOUNG WIFE — We'll discuss that to-morrow night during the cotillion.

YOUNG MAN — Embracing her. My angel.

YOUNG WIFE — Don't muss my hair again.

YOUNG MAN — Well then, to-morrow night at Lobheimer's, and day after to-morrow in my arms.

YOUNG WIFE — Good-by. . . .

YOUNG MAN — Suddenly anxious again. And what will you tell him to-night?

YOUNG WIFE — Don't ask me . . . don't ask me . . . it's too terrible. Why do I love you so? Good-by. If I meet any one again on the stairway, I shall faint. Ugh!

YOUNG MAN — Kisses her hand for the last time.

YOUNG WIFE — Exit.

YOUNG MAN — Remains standing. Then he sits down on the couch. He smiles reflectively, and says to himself. So, I have an affair with a respectable woman, at last.

CURTAIN

YOUNG WIFE AND THE HUSBAND

R.G.

YOUNG WIFE AND THE HUSBAND

A comfortable bedroom. Half past ten at night. The Young Married Woman is in bed, reading. Her Husband enters the room in a dressing gown.

YOUNG WIFE — Without looking up. Through working?

HUSBAND — Yes. I'm tired. And besides . . .

YOUNG WIFE — What?

HUSBAND — I felt lonely at my desk all at once. I began to long for you.

YOUNG WIFE — Looking up. Really?

HUSBAND — Sitting down on the bed beside her. Don't read any more to-night. You'll surely ruin your eyes.

YOUNG WIFE — Closing the book. What's the matter?

HUSBAND — Nothing, dear. I'm in love with you. You know that.

YOUNG WIFE — One might forget it sometimes.

HUSBAND — One must forget it sometimes.

YOUNG WIFE — Why?

HUSBAND — Because, if one didn't, marriage wouldn't be perfect. It would . . . how shall I express it? . . . it would lose its glamor.

YOUNG WIFE — Oh. . . .

HUSBAND — Believe me, it is so. . . . If we hadn't forgotten that we are in love with each other at times during the five years we have been married, we might not be in love any more.

YOUNG WIFE — That's too deep for me.

HUSBAND — It's simply this: we have had about a dozen love-affairs with each other. . . . Doesn't it seem so to you, too?

YOUNG WIFE — I haven't counted them!

HUSBAND — If we had enjoyed the first one to the very utmost, if I had abandoned myself completely to my passion for you in the beginning, the same thing would have happened to us that has happened to millions of other lovers. We should be through with each other.

YOUNG WIFE — Ah . . . do you mean that?

HUSBAND — Believe me, Emma, in the early days of our marriage, I dreaded that that might happen.

YOUNG WIFE — So did I.

HUSBAND — See? Wasn't I right? That's why it is wise for us, now and then, to be nothing but good friends to each other.

YOUNG WIFE — Oh.

HUSBAND — That's how it is possible for us to keep on having new honeymoons, because I never let our honeymoons . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Last too long.

HUSBAND — Exactly.

YOUNG WIFE — And now . . . another period of friendship is up.

HUSBAND — Pressing her tenderly to him. It ought to be.

YOUNG WIFE — But if . . . it isn't up for me?

HUSBAND — It is up for you. You are the nicest and most sensible person in the world. I am very lucky to have found you.

YOUNG WIFE — It's wonderful, the way you make love, now and then.

HUSBAND — Also gone to bed. For a man who has seen something of the world—there, lay your head on my shoulder—marriage is much more mysterious than it is for you sheltered girls. You come to us innocent and to a degree, at least, ignorant, and so you really have a clearer perception of the true nature of love.

YOUNG WIFE — Ha! ha!

HUSBAND — Certainly. For we get all mixed up by the many experiences that we went through before marriage. You women, of course, hear a lot of things, you know a lot of things, and of course, read too much, but you can't have any real idea of the things men experience. We men actually become quite disgusted with what is commonly called love, for the creatures who are thrown in our way are a sort . . .

YOUNG WIFE — What sort? Tell me.

HUSBAND — Kissing her on the forehead. You ought to be glad, dear child, that you never had occasion to see. After all, most of the poor creatures are quite pitiful. Let's not cast any stones.

YOUNG WIFE — I can't see for the life of me, why we should pity them.

HUSBAND — With gentle benevolence. They have it coming to them. You young girls of good family, who wait at home under the protection of your parents for an eligible man to come courting—you don't know the poverty that drives most of these poor creatures into the arms of sin.

YOUNG WIFE — Are they all so poor that they have to sell themselves?

HUSBAND — That's not what I mean. I'm not speaking of material poverty, so much as of a moral misery. A lack of opportunity to know what is right, and, especially, what is noble.

YOUNG WIFE — But why pity them? They seem to get along pretty well.

HUSBAND — You have strange ideas, my dear. You must not forget that such people are naturally doomed to fall lower and lower. There is no stopping them.

YOUNG WIFE — Cuddling to him. It's so pleasant to fall.

HUSBAND — Hurt. How can you say such things, Emma? I should think that to a respectable woman like you, nothing could be more repulsive than those who have forfeited—

YOUNG WIFE — Of course, Karl, of course. I just said that to be saying something. Go on. It's so nice to hear you talk like this. Tell me something.

HUSBAND — What?

YOUNG WIFE — Why—about these creatures.

HUSBAND — What do you want to know?

YOUNG WIFE — Remember, when we were first married I was always asking you to tell me about your bachelor life.

HUSBAND — Why should that interest you?

YOUNG WIFE — Aren't you my husband? Isn't it an injustice for me to know nothing about your past?

HUSBAND — You surely don't think I have such bad taste, as . . . No, Emma . . . it would be sacrilege.

YOUNG WIFE — And yet you have held, heaven knows how many other women in your arms, just as you are holding me now.

HUSBAND — Don't say "women." You are the woman.

YOUNG WIFE — But you positively must answer one question . . . or else . . . or else . . . there won't be any honeymoon.

HUSBAND — That's a fine way to talk . . . remember you are a mother . . . our little girl is sleeping in there. . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Snuggling against him. But I want a boy, too.

HUSBAND — Emma!

YOUNG WIFE — Don't be silly . . . of course, I am your wife . . . but I'd like to be . . . to be your sweetheart, a little, too.

HUSBAND — Would you? . . .

YOUNG WIFE — First my question.

HUSBAND — Wheedled. All right.

YOUNG WIFE — Was there . . . a married woman among them?

HUSBAND — Why? What do you mean?

YOUNG WIFE — You know what I mean.

HUSBAND — Slightly disconcerted. What makes you think of such a thing?

YOUNG WIFE — I'd like to know if . . . I mean—there are such women. I know that. But did you? . . .

HUSBAND — Earnestly. Do you know such a woman?

YOUNG WIFE — I don't know whether I do or not.

HUSBAND — Perhaps, one of your friends is such a person?

YOUNG WIFE — How can I make sure—one way or the other?

HUSBAND — Did any of your friends—women talk about a lot of things when they get together—did any of them ever confess?

YOUNG WIFE — Uncertain. No.

HUSBAND — Do you suspect any friend of yours who might . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Suspect . . . hmmm . . . suspect.

HUSBAND — You seem to.

YOUNG WIFE — No, Karl, of course not. When I think it over, I wouldn't believe it of any of them.

HUSBAND — Not one?

YOUNG WIFE — Not any friend of mine.

HUSBAND — Promise me, Emma . . .

YOUNG WIFE — What?

HUSBAND — That you will never associate with a woman whom you suspect, ever so little, of not leading a perfectly blameless life.

YOUNG WIFE — Do I have to promise that?

HUSBAND — I know that you will not deliberately cultivate such women. But it might happen that you . . . in fact it often happens that such women, whose reputations are not of the best, cultivate good women, partly as foils, and partly because they feel . . . how shall I say it . . . because they feel homesick for virtue.

YOUNG WIFE — Do they?

HUSBAND — Yes. I believe it is quite true what I just said. Homesick for virtue. For all these women are really very unhappy; take my word for that.

YOUNG WIFE — Why are they unhappy?

HUSBAND — You ask me, Emma? How can you? Just imagine what a life these women lead! A life of lies, trickery, vulgarity, and danger.

YOUNG WIFE — Yes, of course. You are quite right.

HUSBAND — Truly . . . they pay for their little happiness . . . their little . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Pleasure.

HUSBAND — Why "pleasure"? What makes you call it "pleasure"?

YOUNG WIFE — Well, there must be something in it! Or they wouldn't do it.

HUSBAND — It's nothing . . . a drunkenness.

YOUNG WIFE — Pensively. Drunkenness . . .

HUSBAND — It is not even drunkenness. Anyway—it is dearly paid for, that much is certain.

YOUNG WIFE — Well . . . it has happened to you, hasn't it?

HUSBAND — Yes, Emma. It is the thing I most regret.

YOUNG WIFE — Who was she? Tell me! Do I know her?

HUSBAND — What can you be thinking of?

YOUNG WIFE — Was it long ago? Was it very long before you married me?

HUSBAND — Don't ask me. Please, don't ask.

YOUNG WIFE — But, Karl!

HUSBAND — She is dead.

YOUNG WIFE — Honest?

HUSBAND — Yes . . . it may sound ridiculous, but I have the feeling that all these women die young.

YOUNG WIFE — Did you love her very much?

HUSBAND — One doesn't love women who lie.

YOUNG WIFE — Then why . . .

HUSBAND — Drunkenness . . .

YOUNG WIFE — And then what?

HUSBAND — Don't talk about it any more, please. It was over and done with long ago. I have loved only one woman, you. A man doesn't love until he finds purity and truth.

YOUNG WIFE — Karl!

HUSBAND — How secure, how happy I feel in these arms. Why didn't I know you as a child? I am sure I wouldn't have looked at other women.

YOUNG WIFE — Karl!

HUSBAND — And how beautiful you are! . . . beautiful! Come . . . come. . He puts the light out.

* * * * * * * *

YOUNG WIFE — Do you know what I am thinking of to-night?

HUSBAND — What, Sweetheart?

YOUNG WIFE — Of . . . of . . . Venice.

HUSBAND — The first night. . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Yes. . . .

HUSBAND — What else? Tell me!

YOUNG WIFE — You love me as much to-day.

HUSBAND — Yes, just as much.

YOUNG WIFE — Oh . . . if you would always . . .

HUSBAND — In her arms. Would what?

YOUNG WIFE — My Karl!

HUSBAND — What do you mean? If I would always? . . .

YOUNG WIFE — Mmmm.

HUSBAND — But what? If I would always what?

YOUNG WIFE — Then I should always know that you love me.

HUSBAND — Yes. But you must remember this. One cannot always be a lover, sometimes one has to go out into the hostile world to fight and strive! Don't forget that, my dear. There is a time for everything in marriage—that is the beauty of it. There are not many who can remember—their Venice—after five years.

YOUNG WIFE — There certainly aren't.

HUSBAND — And . . . good-night, my dear.

YOUNG WIFE — Good-night!

CURTAIN

HUSBAND AND THE SWEET THING

R.G.

HUSBAND AND THE SWEET THING

A private dining-room in the Riedhof, comfortably and tastefully furnished. A lighted gasgrate is disclosed. The remains of a meal on the table, cream-cakes, fruit, cheese. In the wine-glasses is a Hungarian white wine. The Husband and the Sweet Thing.

HUSBAND — Smoking a Havana cigar, and lolling at the end of the sofa.

SWEET THING — Sits near him in a chair at the table eating the cream out of a cake with a spoon, and smacking her lips.

HUSBAND — Is it good?

SWEET THING — Without stopping. Mmmm.

HUSBAND — Do you want another?

SWEET THING — No. I've eaten too much already.

HUSBAND — Your wine is all gone. He fills her glass.

SWEET THING — Stop. I wouldn't drink it.

HUSBAND — Come and sit here with me.

SWEET THING — In a minute, I'm not through yet.

HUSBAND — Gets up and stands behind her chair, puts his arms around her, turning her face toward him.

SWEET THING — What's the idea?

HUSBAND — I want a kiss.

SWEET THING — Kissing him. You sure got your nerve.

HUSBAND — Just finding that out?

SWEET THING — No. I knew it when you stopped me in the street. You must think I'm a nice one.

HUSBAND — Why?

SWEET THING — Because I came right along when you said "Let's go to a private dining room."

HUSBAND — You didn't rush at that.

SWEET THING — You got such a cute way of asking.

HUSBAND — Do you think so?

SWEET THING — And, after all, what's the difference—

HUSBAND — Exactly.

SWEET THING — Whether we go walking or—

HUSBAND — It's much too cold for walking.

SWEET THING — Of course.

HUSBAND — But it's good and warm here, isn't it? He sits down again, puts his arms around the girl, and draws her to his side.

SWEET THING — Weakly. Please . . . don't.

HUSBAND — Tell me. . . . You had noticed me before, hadn't you?

SWEET THING — Yes. Several blocks before you spoke to me.

HUSBAND — I don't mean to-day. I mean yesterday and the day before, when I was following you.

SWEET THING — A lot of men follow me.

HUSBAND — I should say so. But did you notice me?

SWEET THING — Guess what happened to me not long ago. My cousin's husband followed me in the dark, and didn't know who I was.

HUSBAND — Did he speak to you?

SWEET THING — What do you think? Think everybody is as fresh as you?

HUSBAND — But they sometimes do, don't they?

SWEET THING — Of course, they do.

HUSBAND — What do you do?

SWEET THING — Nothing—I just don't answer.

HUSBAND — Hm-m . . . but you answered me.

SWEET THING — Sorry, aren't you?

HUSBAND — Kisses her vehemently. Your lips are as sweet as cream-cakes.

SWEET THING — They taste that way naturally.

HUSBAND — I suppose a good many men have told you that?

SWEET THING — A good many! You sure got your imagination.

HUSBAND — Now, be honest. How many men have kissed this sweet mouth before?

SWEET THING — Why do you ask? You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

HUSBAND — Why not?

SWEET THING — Guess.

HUSBAND — All right, I'll guess—but you musn't get mad!

SWEET THING — Me get mad?

HUSBAND — Well, then, I guess . . . twenty.

SWEET THING — Disengaging herself. Why not a hundred?

HUSBAND — Come, I was just guessing.

SWEET THING — You guessed wrong!

HUSBAND — Say—ten.

SWEET THING — Offended. Of course! A girl who lets a man talk to her on the street, and goes to a private dining room with him!

HUSBAND — Don't be childish. Whether we stroll around in the streets or sit in a room. . . . We are in a restaurant. The waiter may come in any minute. There's nothing to this.

SWEET THING — That's just what I thought.

HUSBAND — Have you ever been in a private dining-room before?

SWEET THING — To tell the truth—yes.

HUSBAND — I am glad that you are honest with me.

SWEET THING — But it wasn't the way you think. I was in a private dining-room with my girl friend and her fiancé, last carnival.

HUSBAND — It wouldn't have been anything terrible, even if you had gone there with your sweetheart—

SWEET THING — Of course, it wouldn't have been anything terrible. But I haven't any sweetheart.

HUSBAND — Oh, go on!

SWEET THING — I swear, I haven't.

HUSBAND — You aren't trying to tell me that I . . .

SWEET THING — That you are what? I haven't had one—haven't had one for more than six months.

HUSBAND — I see. . . . But before then? Who was he?

SWEET THING — Why are you so curious?

HUSBAND — Because I love you.

SWEET THING — Really?

HUSBAND — Of course! You must have seen that I did, already. Tell me about him. Presses her tightly to him.

SWEET THING — What do you want me to tell?

HUSBAND — Don't keep me asking! Who was he, that's what I want to know.

SWEET THING — Laughing. Just a man.

HUSBAND — Well . . . well . . . who?

SWEET THING — He looked something like you.

HUSBAND — I see.

SWEET THING — If you hadn't looked like him—

HUSBAND — What then?

SWEET THING — Now, don't ask, don't you see that . . .

HUSBAND — Understanding. That's why you let me speak to you.

SWEET THING — Yes, that's it.

HUSBAND — I really don't know whether I ought to be tickled or get mad.

SWEET THING — If I were you, I'd be tickled.

HUSBAND — All right.

SWEET THING — You talk like him too. And you have the same way of looking at . . . a person . . .

HUSBAND — What did he do for a living?

SWEET THING — No, your eyes—

HUSBAND — What was his name?

SWEET THING — Please don't look at me that way; please don't.

HUSBAND — Embraces her. A long, burning kiss.

SWEET THING — Shivers, tries to get up.

HUSBAND — Why do you want to leave?

SWEET THING — It's time to go home.

HUSBAND — Later.

SWEET THING — No, I really have to get home. What will mother say?

HUSBAND — You live with your mother?

SWEET THING — Of course, I live with my mother. What did you suppose?

HUSBAND — So—with your mother. You two alone?

SWEET THING — Alone, like fun. There are five of us! Two boys and two more girls.

HUSBAND — Don't sit so far away from me. Are you the oldest?

SWEET THING — No, I'm next oldest. Kitty is the oldest. She works in a flower store.

HUSBAND — Where do you work?

SWEET THING — I stay at home.

HUSBAND — Always?

SWEET THING — One of us has to stay home.

HUSBAND — Of course, and what do you tell your mother, when you come home so late?

SWEET THING — That hardly ever happens.

HUSBAND — Well, to-night, for instance. Your mother will ask you, won't she?

SWEET THING — Of course, she'll ask. It doesn't matter how careful I am when I come home, she always wakes up.

HUSBAND — And what do you tell her?

SWEET THING — Oh—that I've been to the theater.

HUSBAND — Does she believe it?

SWEET THING — Why shouldn't she believe it? I often go to the theater. Only last Sunday I went to the opera with my girl friend and her fiancé, and my oldest brother.

HUSBAND — Where did you get the tickets?

SWEET THING — My brother is a hairdresser.

HUSBAND — A hairdresser . . . oh, at the theater, I suppose.

SWEET THING — Why do you ask so many questions?

HUSBAND — Just because I am interested. What does your other brother do?

SWEET THING — He's still going to school. He wants to be a teacher. Imagine!

HUSBAND — And you have a little sister?

SWEET THING — Yes, she is just a child, but you have to keep an eye on her all the time, already. You have no idea how girls are spoiled at school. What do you think? The other day I caught her keeping a date.

HUSBAND — Really?

SWEET THING — Yes! She was out walking one evening at half-past seven with a boy from the school across the street. A baby like her!

HUSBAND — What did you do?

SWEET THING — I gave her a spanking.

HUSBAND — Are you as strict as all that?

SWEET THING — Who would be if I wasn't? My older sister is working and mother does nothing but grumble . . . it's all up to me.

HUSBAND — God, you're nice. Kisses her, and grows more tender. You remind me of some one, too.

SWEET THING — Who?

HUSBAND — No one in particular . . . of bygone days . . . of my youth. Come on, drink, little girl.

SWEET THING — Say, how old are you? . . . You . . . why . . . I don't even know your name.

HUSBAND — Karl.

SWEET THING — Is it possible? Your name is Karl?

HUSBAND — Was his name Karl, too?

SWEET THING — No, that's what's so queer . . . your . . . eyes . . . The way you look at me. . . .

HUSBAND — What was he? You haven't told me yet.

SWEET THING — Oh, he was a bad man . . . he must have been or he wouldn't have left me in the lurch.

HUSBAND — Did you love him very much?

SWEET THING — Of course, I loved him.

HUSBAND — I know what he was—a lieutenant.

SWEET THING — No, he wasn't in the army. They wouldn't take him. His father owns a house in . . . but why do you have to know?

HUSBAND — Kisses her. Your eyes are really grey. At first, I thought they were black.

SWEET THING — Aren't they pretty enough for you?

HUSBAND — Kisses her eyes.

SWEET THING — Don't please—I won't have it. . . . O, please don't! Let me get up . . . only for a minute . . . please.

HUSBAND — More tenderly still. No, indeed.

SWEET THING — But, please, Karl. . . .

HUSBAND — How old are you? Eighteen, aren't you?

SWEET THING — Just past nineteen.

HUSBAND — Nineteen . . . and I—

SWEET THING — You are thirty. . . .

HUSBAND — And a little over. Let's not talk about it.

SWEET THING — He was thirty-two, when I first met him.

HUSBAND — How long ago was that?

SWEET THING — I don't remember. . . . Say, there must have been something in that wine.

HUSBAND — What makes you think so?

SWEET THING — I am all . . . see—everything going round and round.

HUSBAND — Then hold tight to me. Like this . . He holds her close to him, and becomes more and more tender. She resists very little. I'll tell you something, dear. We might go on . . . go on . . .

SWEET THING — Home . . .

HUSBAND — Well, not exactly home. . . .

SWEET THING — What do you mean? O, no—no. . . . I won't go anywhere else. What do you think I am?

HUSBAND — But listen to me, child, the next time we meet, you know, we will arrange it so that . . . He has slipped to the floor with his head in her lap. This is so nice, so nice!

SWEET THING — What are you doing? She kisses his hair. There must have been something in that wine . . . I'm so sleepy . . . What would happen, if I couldn't get up again? But, but, look, but Karl, if some one should come in . . . please . . . the waiter.

HUSBAND — No . . . waiter . . . will ever come in here. . . .

* * * * * * * *

HUSBAND — Pacing up and down the little room, after lighting a cigarette. Long silence.

SWEET THING — Leaning back at the end of the sofa with closed eyes.

HUSBAND — Looking for a long time at the girl; speaking to himself. Who knows what sort of a person she really is? Damn it! So quick . . . This wasn't very prudent of me . . . hmm. . . .

SWEET THING — Without opening her eyes. There must have been something in the wine.

HUSBAND — Why do you think so?

SWEET THING — If there hadn't been . . .

HUSBAND — Why do you blame everything on the wine?

SWEET THING — Where are you? Why are you so far away? Come here, to me.

HUSBAND — Sits beside her.

SWEET THING — Now tell me if you really love me.

HUSBAND — But you know . . . He interrupts himself quickly. Of course.

SWEET THING — Listen. . . . There must have . . . come, tell me the truth, what was in the wine?

HUSBAND — Why, do you think I would drug your wine?

SWEET THING — Well, you see, I can't understand it. I'm really not that kind. . . . We've just met . . . I swear, I'm not that kind . . . Honestly, I'm not. If you think that of me—

HUSBAND — Well, why worry about it? I don't think anything bad of you. I think you love me, that's all.

SWEET THING — Hm . . . hm . . .

HUSBAND — After all, when two young people are alone in a room, and have dinner, and drink wine . . . there doesn't need to be anything in the wine.

SWEET THING — I just said so to be saying something.

HUSBAND — Really, why did you?

SWEET THING — Almost defiantly. Because I was ashamed.

HUSBAND — How absurd! There is no reason to be ashamed. Especially, since I made you think of your first sweetheart.

SWEET THING — Yes.

HUSBAND — Your first sweetheart.

SWEET THING — Mhmm.

HUSBAND — Now I should like to know who the others were.

SWEET THING — There weren't any others.

HUSBAND — That is not true, it can't be true.

SWEET THING — Oh, please, don't tease me.

HUSBAND — Would you like a cigarette?

SWEET THING — No, thanks.

HUSBAND — Do you know what time it is?

SWEET THING — What?

HUSBAND — Half-past eleven.

SWEET THING — Really?

HUSBAND — Well . . . and your mother? She's used to this, isn't she?

SWEET THING — Do you really want me to go home?

HUSBAND — But earlier in the evening you asked me yourself—

SWEET THING — You're not the same person you were awhile ago. What have I done to make you change so?

HUSBAND — What is the matter with you, dear? What's on your mind?

SWEET THING — And it was only your looks, believe me, or you could have talked yourself blue in the face. All sorts of men have asked me to go to private dining-rooms with them.

HUSBAND — Well, would you like . . . to come here again with me soon . . . or somewhere else?

SWEET THING — I don't know.

HUSBAND — What do you mean, "I don't know"?

SWEET THING — Well, why don't you make a date?

HUSBAND — When? First of all, I must explain that I do not live in Vienna. I am only here for a few days at a time, now and then.

SWEET THING — Oh, you're not a Viennese?

HUSBAND — Yes, I am a Viennese. But I am living out of town now. . . .

SWEET THING — Where?

HUSBAND — Oh, that doesn't matter.

SWEET THING — Don't get scared, I won't come to see you.

HUSBAND — If it'd be any fun for you, you can come. I live in Graz.

SWEET THING — Honest?

HUSBAND — Yes, what's so wonderful about that?

SWEET THING — You are married, aren't you?

HUSBAND — What makes you think so?

SWEET THING — I just got a notion you were.

HUSBAND — You don't mind?

SWEET THING — Well, I would rather you were single. So you are married!

HUSBAND — Come on, tell me what made you think I was married.

SWEET THING — When a man says he doesn't live in Vienna and doesn't always have time—

HUSBAND — Is that fishy?

SWEET THING — I don't believe it.

HUSBAND — Does it hurt your conscience to lead a married man astray?

SWEET THING — I don't doubt your wife acts just like you.

HUSBAND — That will do. Such remarks—

SWEET THING — I thought you didn't have a wife.

HUSBAND — Whether I have or not, such remarks are not made in my presence. He has risen.

SWEET THING — But Karl, Karl, what's the matter? Are you mad at me? Really, I didn't know that you were married. I was just talking to hear myself talk. Come, don't be mad.

HUSBAND — Comes back to her after a few minutes. You are strange creatures, you . . . women. He becomes tender again.

SWEET THING — Please . . . don't . . .it's so late.

HUSBAND — Well, then, listen to me. Let's talk seriously. I'd like to see you again. I'd like to see you often.

SWEET THING — Would you?

HUSBAND — But I've got to be absolutely sure I can depend on you. I can't be watching you.

SWEET THING — Oh, I can take care of myself.

HUSBAND — You are . . . well, I can't say inexperienced—but, you are young, and, men in general are pretty thoughtless.

SWEET THING — Oh, my!

HUSBAND — I'm not talking about morals. You know what I mean—

SWEET THING — Tell me, just what do you take me for?

HUSBAND — Look here. If you want me, and me only, we can easily arrange it, even if I do generally live in Graz. A place like this where some one may come in any moment is no place for us.

SWEET THING — Snuggles up to him.

HUSBAND — Next time . . . we'll go somewhere else, what do you say?

SWEET THING — Yes.

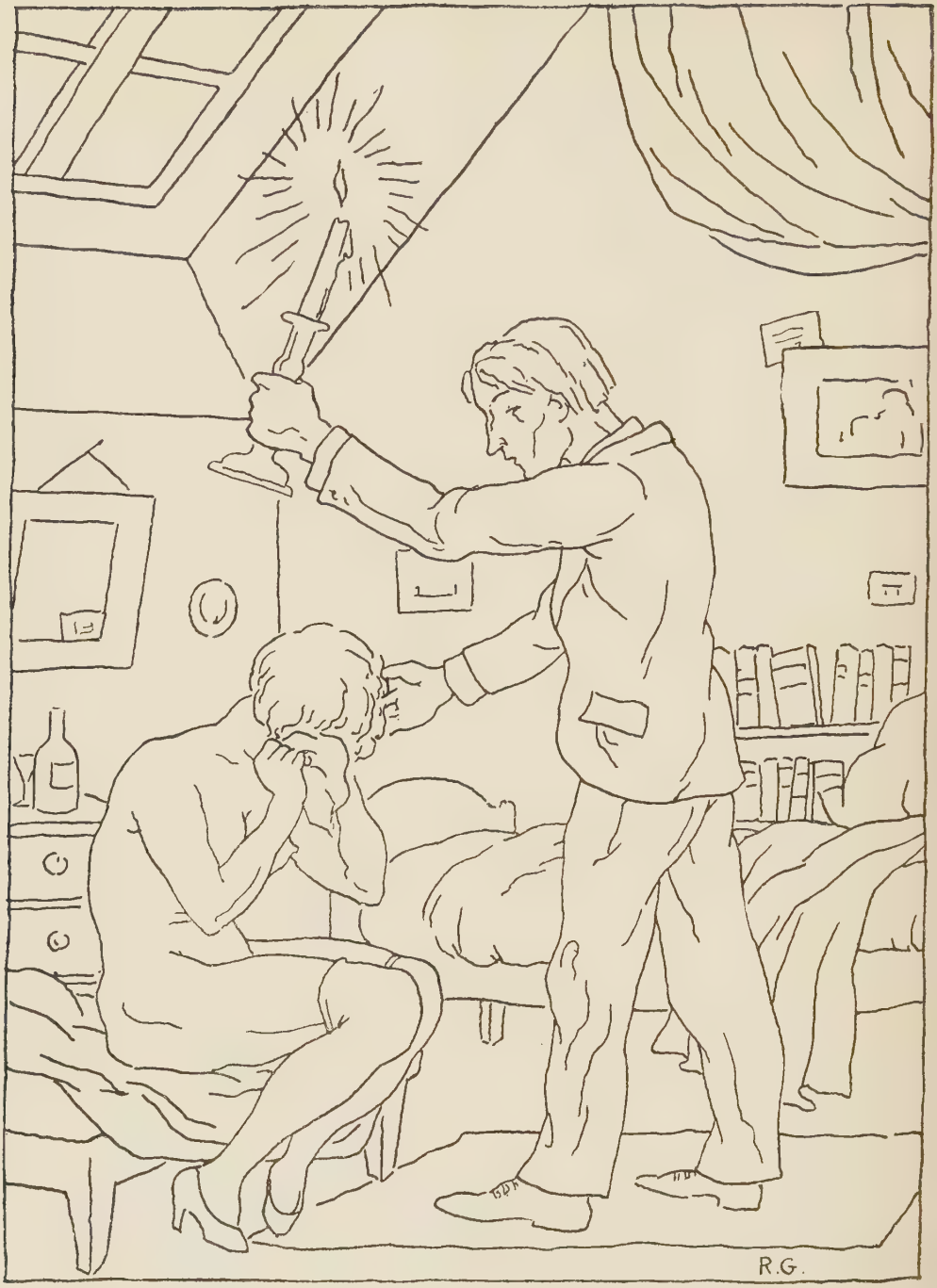
HUSBAND — Where we can be entirely alone.

SWEET THING — Yes.

HUSBAND — Embracing her passionately. We'll talk it over on the way home. He rises, and opens the door. Waiter . . . the check!

CURTAIN

SWEET THING AND THE POET


R.G.

SWEET THING AND THE POET

A small room artistically, but comfortably furnished. Window-drapes which make the room half-dark. Red-blinds. A large writing-table covered with books and papers. A baby-grand piano against the wall. The Sweet Thing and the Poet are just entering. The Poet closes the door.

POET — Kisses her. My darling!

SWEET THING — Has her hat and coat on. Oh! It's gorgeous here! Only you can't see anything!

POET — Your eyes will get used to the soft twilight. Those sweet eyes. Kisses her eyes.

SWEET THING — But these sweet eyes haven't time to do that.

POET — Why not?

SWEET THING — Because I can only stay a minute.

POET — Won't you take off your hat though?

SWEET THING — Just for a minute?

POET — Takes out the pin and puts the hat aside. And your coat—

SWEET THING — The idea! I have to leave right away.

POET — No, you must take a good rest. We've been knocking around for three hours.

SWEET THING — We were riding.

POET — We rode home, but we ran around, it must have been fully three hours, at the country place. Please sit down, anywhere you like. Here at the desk—no, that wouldn't do. On the sofa—how's that! Forces her to sit down. If you're very tired, stretch out—like this She lies down. Put your head on the cushion.

SWEET THING — Laughing. But I'm not tired a bit!

POET — You just think you're not. There, and if you are sleepy, go to sleep. I will be very quiet. And if you like I'll play you a lullaby . . . one of my own . . . He goes to the piano.

SWEET THING — One of your own?

POET — Yes.

SWEET THING — Why Robert, I didn't know you were a composer.

POET — I told you I was a writer. What makes you think I am a composer?

SWEET THING — Why you just said the piece you are playing is your own.

POET — Perhaps it isn't. But it doesn't matter, does it? It certainly doesn't matter who composed it, as long as it is beautiful. Don't you think so?

SWEET THING — Of course it must be beautiful. That's the main thing.

POET — Do you know what I mean?

SWEET THING — Mean—?

POET — By what I just said.

SWEET THING — Sleepily. Of course I do.

POET — Gets up. Goes to her, and strokes her hair. You can't understand a word.

SWEET THING — I'm not so dumb.

POET — Yes, you are, but that is just why I love you. It is wonderful when girls are dumb. I mean in the way you are.

SWEET THING — Go right on being sarcastic.

POET — Angel, little one! Isn't it nice to lie on this soft, Persian couch cover?

SWEET THING — Oh, yes. Don't you want to play something else on the piano?

POET — No, I'd rather be with you. Caressing her.

SWEET THING — Hadn't you better light the light?

POET — Oh, no. . . . The dusk is so restful. We have been bathing in sunshine all day. Now we've just climbed out of the bath and slipped on . . . a bathrobe of twilight. Laughs. No—that ought to be expressed differently. Don't you think so?

SWEET THING — I don't know.

POET — Moves away from her a little. Divine stupidity! He takes out a notebook, and writes a few words in it.

SWEET THING — What are you doing? She turns toward him. What are you writing?

POET — Softly. Sun, bath, twilight, cloak . . . yes . . . He puts the notebook back. Aloud. Nothing. . . . Now, tell me, sweetheart, wouldn't you like something to eat or drink?

SWEET THING — I'm really not thirsty, but I am hungry.

POET — Hm . . . I'd rather you were thirsty. I have some cognac here, but I have to go out for food.

SWEET THING — Can't you send somebody?

POET — Not very easily. The girl isn't here now—Oh well. I'll go. . . . What would you like?

SWEET THING — Really it's hardly worth while. I am going right home, anyway.

POET — That's out of the question. I'll tell you what—when we leave, let's go somewhere and have supper.

SWEET THING — Oh, no. I haven't time for that. And, anyway, where can we go? Somebody we know might see us.

POET — Do you know so many people?

SWEET THING — It takes only one to make trouble.

POET — What sort of trouble?

SWEET THING — Well, suppose mother should hear about this. . . .

POET — We can go where no one can see us. There are plenty of restaurants with private rooms.

SWEET THING — Singing. "Somewhere Alone with You."

POET — Have you ever been in a private dining-room?

SWEET THING — To tell the truth—yes.

POET — Who was the happy man?

SWEET THING — Oh, it wasn't that way. . . . I went with my girl friend and her fiancé. They took me along.

POET — And you expect me to believe that?

SWEET THING — You needn't believe it!

POET — Close to her. Are you blushing? I can hardly see. I can't even distinguish your features. He touches her cheeks with his hands. But even so I recognize you.

SWEET THING — Well, be careful that you don't take me for some one else.

POET — It is strange, I can't remember how you look.

SWEET THING — Thanks.

POET — Seriously. It is uncanny. I can't visualize your features. In a certain sense I have forgotten you already—Now, if I couldn't remember even the sound of your voice, either . . . what would you really be? Something near and far at the same time . . . Eerie.

SWEET THING — What are you talking about?

POET — Nothing, my angel, nothing. Where are your lips? He kisses her.

SWEET THING — Won't you please put the light on?

POET — No. . . . Becomes very tender. Tell me, do you love me?

SWEET THING — Very much . . . oh, so much!

POET — Have you ever loved any one as much as me?

SWEET THING — I told you already that I never truly loved before.

POET — But . . . He sighs.

SWEET THING — He was my fiancé.

POET — I'd rather you didn't mention him now.

SWEET THING — Say . . . what are you doing . . . see here! . . .

POET — We might imagine that we are in a palace in India.

SWEET THING — I'm sure the people there aren't as wicked as you are.

POET — How idiotic! Perfectly divine—Ah, if you only could understand what you are to me. . . .

SWEET THING — What?

POET — Don't push me away like this all the time. I'm not going to do anything—

SWEET THING — But my corset hurts.

POET — Simply. Take it off.

SWEET THING — All right. But you musn't think you can do anything, just because I haven't any corset on.

POET — Of course not.

SWEET THING — Rises, and takes off her corset in the darkness.

POET — Sitting, meanwhile, on the sofa. Tell me, aren't you at all interested in knowing my name?

SWEET THING — Yes, what is your name?

POET — I'd rather not tell you my real name, but my pseudonym is—

SWEET THING — What's a pseudonym?

POET — The name I sign to the things I write.

SWEET THING — Oh, you don't sign your real name?

POET — Close to her.

SWEET THING — Please . . . Don't . . . Stop.

POET — What a fragrance ascends to my nostrils! Ah, how sweet. He kisses her breasts.

SWEET THING — You are tearing my chemise.

POET — Off with it . . . off with it . . . It's in the way.

SWEET THING — Oh, Robert.

POET — And now let's enter our Indian palace.

SWEET THING — Tell me first—do you really love me?

POET — I adore you. Kisses her passionately. I adore you, my sweetheart, my springtime . . . my . . .

SWEET THING — Robert . . . Robert . . .

* * * * * * * *

POET — That was celestial bliss . . . My pen name is . . .

SWEET THING — Robert—oh, my Robert!

POET — Biebitz.

SWEET THING — Why is your pen name Biebitz?

POET — That isn't my real name, my pseudonym. . . . Well, don't you recognize it?

SWEET THING — No.

POET — You don't know the name Biebitz? Divine! Really? You are only pretending that you don't know it, aren't you?

SWEET THING — I swear, I never heard it.

POET — Don't you ever go to the theater?

SWEET THING — Oh, yes. I was at the opera only the other night with —you know, with one of my girl friends and her uncle, to hear Cavalleria Rusticana.

POET — Hm, you never go to plays.

SWEET THING — I never get passes for them.

POET — I'll send you one very soon.

SWEET THING — Oh, do! And don't forget, for something funny.

POET — Oh . . . something funny . . . you don't care to see anything sad?

SWEET THING — I'd rather not.

POET — Not even if it is a play of mine?

SWEET THING — A play of yours? Do you write plays?

POET — Excuse me, I just want to light a candle. I haven't seen you since you have become my beloved—Angel! He lights a candle.

SWEET THING — Don't, I'm ashamed. Give me something to cover myself, please.

POET — Pretty soon! He approaches her with the light, and looks at her a long time.

SWEET THING — Covering her face with her hands. Go away, Robert!

POET — You are beautiful, you are Beauty. Perhaps you are Nature. You are Holy Simplicity.

SWEET THING — Ouch! You are dropping wax on me. Can't you be more careful?

POET — Puts the candle away. You are that which I have long sought. You love me for my own sake. I might be only a clerk, yet you would love me. It does my heart good. I must confess I could not help suspecting until this moment. Tell me, honestly, you didn't think that I might be Biebitz?

SWEET THING — Gosh, I don't know him. What are you trying to get me to say? I never heard of Biebitz before.

POET — Such is fame! No, forget what I have told you. Forget Biebitz. I am Robert and I want to be only Robert to you. I was only joking. Lightly. I'm no writer at all. I'm a clerk and in the evening I play the piano in a night-club.

SWEET THING — But now I'm all mixed up . . . and the way you look at a person. What's the matter with you? What do you mean?

POET — Very strange! It's something that has never happened to me, sweetheart; I am on the verge of tears. You move me deeply. Live with me, will you? We shall be very dear to each other.

SWEET THING — Is it true about the night-club?

POET — Yes, but don't speak about it any more. If you love me, don't ask me any questions at all. Tell me, can you get away for a few weeks?

SWEET THING — How do you mean get away?

POET — I mean, leave home?

SWEET THING — How can I! What would mother say? And if I was not there, the whole house would be upside down in no time.

POET — I had a beautiful picture of you and me together, in the solitude of a great forest, living the life of nature for a few weeks . . . Eden. And then, some day, "Good-by" —going our separate ways, not knowing where . . .

SWEET THING — You are already talking about "Good-by." And I thought you loved me so much.

POET — That is just the reason. Bends over her, and kisses her on the forehead. You sweet thing!

SWEET THING — Please, hold me tight. I feel so cold.

POET — I suppose it's time you were getting dressed. Wait, I'll light a few more candles for you.

SWEET THING — Rising. Don't look.

POET — No. At the window. Tell me, sweet, are you happy?

SWEET THING — How do you mean?

POET — I mean are you glad you're alive? Is the world a great old place?

SWEET THING — Things could be a lot better.

POET — You don't get me. I know you're having a hard time at home. I know you are not a princess. All the same, isn't it wonderful to feel life pulsing through you?

SWEET THING — Got a comb?

POET — Goes to the dressing-table, hands her a comb, and watches her. God, how ravishing you look!

SWEET THING — Please . . . no more!

POET — Please, stay here a while. I'll get something for supper, and . . .

SWEET THING — But it is awfully late already.

POET — It is not nine yet.

SWEET THING — Gee. I must hurry. Please!

POET — When shall I see you again?

SWEET THING — When do you want to see me?

POET — To-morrow.

SWEET THING — What's to-morrow?

POET — Saturday.

SWEET THING — Oh, I can't. I must take my little sister to see her guardian.

POET — Then Sunday . . . hm . . . Sunday . . . on Sunday . . . now I'll have to explain something to you. I'm not Biebitz, but Biebitz is a friend of mine. I'll introduce you sometime. Biebitz's play will be given Sunday. I'll send you a pass, and take you home after the show. You will tell me how you liked the play. Won't you?

SWEET THING — Here you are talking about this Biebitz again. I don't understand what it is all about.

POET — I shan't know you really, until I know what the play means to you.

SWEET THING — Now . . . I'm ready.

POET — Come, sweetheart. They go out.

CURTAIN

POET AND THE ACTRESS

R.G.

POET AND THE ACTRESS

A room in a country inn. It is a spring night. Moonlight over the meadows and hills. The windows are open. The Poet and the Actress enter, and as they cross the threshold, the candle which the Poet carries is blown out.

POET — Oh. . . .

ACTRESS — What's the matter?

POET — The candle.—But we don't need it. Look how light it is. Wonderful!

ACTRESS — Sinks down suddenly before the window with joined hands.

POET — What's the matter?

ACTRESS — Remains silent.

POET — Going to her. What are you doing?

ACTRESS — Indignant. Can't you see? I am praying—

POET — Do you believe in God?

ACTRESS — Certainly, I am not a yellow atheist.

POET — Yellow?

ACTRESS Come kneel down beside me. Really you may pray just once. It won't take the crease out of your trousers.

POET Kneels beside her, and puts his arm around her waist.

ACTRESS Profligate! Rises. And do you know to whom I prayed?

POET To God, presumably.

ACTRESS With deep sarcasm. Ah, my lord, I was praying to you.

POET Then why did you look out the window?

ACTRESS Suppose you tell me first where you have dragged me, seducer.

POET But, dear, it was your idea. You wanted to go to the country—and chose this very place.

ACTRESS Well, isn't it a good place?

POET Certainly. It's charming here. Just think—two hours out of Vienna—perfect solitude. And what a landscape!

ACTRESS Yes. You could even write something if you had any talent.

POET You've been here before?

ACTRESS Have I been here before? I lived here for years.

POET With whom?

ACTRESS With Fred, of course.

POET Oh!

ACTRESS How I loved that man!

POET You've told me all about it.

ACTRESS I am sorry. I can go away if I bore you!

POET Bore me? You can't imagine what you mean to me. . . . You are a whole world to me. . . . You are divine, you are genius. . . . You are Holy Simplicity. Yes, you are . . . But you oughtn't to talk about Fred now.

ACTRESS That was a faux pas. Well?

POET I am glad you see it that way.

ACTRESS Come, give me a kiss!

POET Kisses her.

ACTRESS But now we had better say good night. Good night, darling!

POET What do you mean?

ACTRESS I mean, I am going to lie down and go to sleep.

POET Certainly, do that very thing, but this . . . "good night" business . . . Where do I stay?

ACTRESS There are lots of other rooms here.

POET What of that? Don't you think I better light a candle?

ACTRESS Yes.

POET *Lights a candle, which stands upon the dressing-table.* What a charming room . . . and what pious people they must be. Pictures of saints everywhere. It would be interesting to spend some time among people like this . . . quite another world. How little we know of our fellow creatures.

ACTRESS Quit talking nonsense, and reach me the bag from the table.

POET Here, my only beloved!

ACTRESS *Takes a small framed picture out of the hand-bag and puts it on the dressing-table.*

POET What's that?

ACTRESS That's the Virgin.

POET — Do you always carry her around with you?

ACTRESS — She is my talisman. And now go, Robert!

POET — What kind of a joke is this? Don't you want me to . . .

ACTRESS — No, you must go.

POET — And when am I to come in?

ACTRESS — In ten minutes.

POET — Kisses her. Au revoir!

ACTRESS — Where are you going?

POET — I shall walk up and down under your window. I love to stroll about in the fresh air at night. My finest inspirations come to me that way. And now, near you, enveloped in the atmosphere of your longing . . . and wafted away by your art . . .

ACTRESS — You talk like an idiot . . .

POET — Hurt. There are women who might say . . . like a poet.

ACTRESS — All right, but now do go. And don't flirt with the waitress.

POET — Goes.

ACTRESS — Undresses. She hears the Poet going downstairs, and now she hears his steps under her window. As soon as she is undressed, she goes to the window and looks down where he stands waiting. She whispers to him. Come!

POET — Comes quickly upstairs and runs toward her. She, meanwhile, has gone to bed and put out the light. He locks the door.

ACTRESS — Now you may sit down beside me, and tell me a story.

POET — Sits down on the bed beside her. Hadn't I better close the window? Isn't it too cold for you?

ACTRESS — Oh, no!

POET — Now, what shall I tell you?

ACTRESS — Tell me to whom you are unfaithful at this moment.

POET — Unfortunately, I'm not unfaithful yet.

ACTRESS — Then take comfort in knowing that I am unfaithful to some one.

POET — I can well imagine.

ACTRESS — Who do you suppose it is?

POET — But, my dear, how do you expect me to know?

ACTRESS Guess, then.

POET Let's see . . . your manager.

ACTRESS My dear man, I'm not a chorus-girl.

POET Well, I just thought . . .

ACTRESS Guess again.

POET Then it's your leading-man . . . Benno.

ACTRESS Stupid! He doesn't care for women at all . . . didn't you know that? He's having an affair with his postman!

POET You don't say.

ACTRESS Come, kiss me.

POET Embraces her.

ACTRESS What are you doing?

POET Don't torment me so!

ACTRESS Listen, Robert, I will make you a proposition. Come lie down in bed with me.

POET You bet I will!

ACTRESS Hurry, hurry!

POET — Yes . . . if it had been up to me I would have been there long ago. . . . Listen . . .

ACTRESS — What?

POET — To the crickets chirping out there.

ACTRESS — You are crazy, dear, there are no crickets here.

POET — But you can hear them.

ACTRESS — Will you hurry up?

POET — Beside her. Here I am.

ACTRESS — Now lie quiet . . . Sh . . . don't move. . . .

POET — But, what's the idea?

ACTRESS — You would like to have an affair with me?

POET — That ought to be pretty clear to you by now.

ACTRESS — There are a good many men who would like to . . .

POET — Yet it can not be gainsaid that at this particular moment my chances seem to be the best.

ACTRESS — Then, come, my cricket! I shall call you "cricket" from now on.

POET — All right. . . .

ACTRESS Now, tell me, whom am I deceiving?

POET Whom? . . . Perhaps me. . . .

ACTRESS Dear, you have softening of the brain.

POET Or some one . . . whom you have never seen . . . some one, whom you don't know, some one—who is set apart for you and whom you will never find . . .

ACTRESS Please don't talk romantic nonsense.

POET Isn't it strange . . . you too, and yet one would think . . . But no, that would take away the best in you. Come—dear—come.

* * * * * * * *

ACTRESS That's better than acting in idiotic plays. Don't you think so?

POET Well it's good to know that occasionally you get to act in an intelligent one.

ACTRESS You conceited puppy. I suppose you're thinking of that play of yours.

POET Yes, I am.

ACTRESS Seriously. Undoubtedly it is a masterpiece.

POET Right!

ACTRESS Yes, you are a genius, Robert!

POET I seize the opportunity of asking why you broke that date the night before last. There was absolutely nothing the matter with you.

ACTRESS I just wanted to hurt you.

POET But why? What have I done to you?

ACTRESS You were very up-stage.

POET How so?

ACTRESS Everybody at the theater thinks you are.

POET Really?

ACTRESS But I told them, "I guess he has a perfect right to be up-stage."

POET And what did they say?

ACTRESS How could they say anything? I no longer speak to any of them.

POET Oh, I see.

ACTRESS They would like nothing better than to poison me, every one of them. But they won't get the chance.

POET — Don't think now of anybody else. Be glad that you are here with me, and tell me that you love me.

ACTRESS — What more proof do you want?

POET — It can't be proved.

ACTRESS — Fine! Then what more do you want?

POET — How many other men have . . . had this sort of proof? Did you love them all?

ACTRESS — No, I have loved only one.

POET — Embraces her. My . . .

ACTRESS — Fred . . .

POET — My name is Robert. What do I mean to you, if you are thinking of Fred, now?

ACTRESS — You are just a caprice.

POET — Thanks for letting me know.

ACTRESS — Well, aren't you glad?

POET — Glad of being a caprice?

ACTRESS — It seems to me that you have a very good reason to be glad.

POET — Oh, this—

ACTRESS — Yes, this, my funny little cricket!—Say what about that chirping? Are they still chirping?

POET — Don't you hear them?

ACTRESS — Of course, I hear them. But, my dear, those are frogs.

POET — You are mistaken. Frogs croak.

ACTRESS — Of course, they croak.

POET — Those things aren't croaking, dear, they're chirping.

ACTRESS — You are the most obstinate person I have ever run into. Kiss me, Froggie.

POET — Please don't call me that. It makes me nervous all over.

ACTRESS — Well, what shall I call you?

POET — I have a name. Robert.

ACTRESS — Oh, but that's too stupid.

POET — Please simply call me by my own name.

ACTRESS — Well, then, Robert, give me a kiss. . . . Ah! She kisses him. Now, are you satisfied, Froggie? Ha-ha-ha.

POET — May I light a cigarette?

ACTRESS — Give me one too. He takes his cigarette-case from the dressing-table; takes out two cigarettes, lights both, and gives her one. By the way, you haven't said a word about my performance yesterday.

POET — What performance?

ACTRESS — What performance!

POET — Oh, yes. I wasn't at the theater.

ACTRESS — You're trying to be funny.

POET — Why should I? After you broke that date I assumed you wouldn't be in full possession of your powers, yesterday, so I decided not to go.

ACTRESS — You missed something wonderful.

POET — Yes?

ACTRESS — It was a sensation. The people actually turned pale.

POET — You really could tell?

ACTRESS — Benno said, "Dearie, you acted divinely."

POET — Hm! . . . And so ill the day before.

ACTRESS — Indeed I was. And do you know why? Because of my longing for you.

POET — A little while ago you said that you stayed away just to hurt me.

ACTRESS — But what do you know about my love for you? You are so cold. I was delirious all night. Had high fever, hundred and four.

POET — Rather high temperature for a caprice.

ACTRESS — You call it a caprice! I am dying for love of you, and you call it a caprice . . .

POET — And Fred . . .

ACTRESS — Fred? . . . Don't mention that tramp!

CURTAIN

ACTRESS AND THE COUNT

R.G.

ACTRESS AND THE COUNT

The bedroom of the Actress, luxuriously furnished. It is midday. The blinds are still down. A candle is burning on the dressing-table. The Actress is lying in her four-poster bed. On the cover are many newspapers. The Count, wearing his uniform of captain in the Dragoons, enters. He stops just inside the door.

ACTRESS — Ah, Count.

COUNT — The good mother said I might, otherwise I wouldn't—

ACTRESS — Please, come in.

COUNT — I kiss your hand. Pardon me . . . just coming in from the street . . . I can't see a thing yet. Oh, now I find the way. At her bedside. I kiss your hand.

ACTRESS — Please sit down, Count.

COUNT — The good mother said, "The young lady isn't well." . . . Nothing serious, I hope.

ACTRESS — Nothing serious? I was at the point of death.

COUNT — Dear me! Surely not.

ACTRESS — You are very kind to bother about me.

COUNT — At the point of death! And last night you were still able to give a divine performance.

ACTRESS — It seems to have been a great success.

COUNT — Tremendous! . . . The audience was carried away. To say nothing about myself.

ACTRESS — Thanks for the beautiful flowers.

COUNT — Don't mention them.

ACTRESS — Looking significantly at a large basket of flowers on a little table near the window. You see I have them near me.

COUNT — You were literally overwhelmed with flowers and wreaths yesterday.

ACTRESS — I left them in my dressing-room. All I brought home was your basket.

COUNT — Kissing her hand. That's nice of you.

ACTRESS — Suddenly seizes his hand, and kisses it.

COUNT — But, my dear lady.

ACTRESS — Don't be frightened, Count, it doesn't bind you to anything.

COUNT — You are a strange being . . . enigmatic, one might almost say. Pause.

ACTRESS — Miss Birken, I suppose, is less puzzling.

COUNT — Little Birken is no puzzle at all. That is, of course, I really know her only very slightly.

ACTRESS — Oh!

COUNT — Believe me. But you are a puzzle. I've always been fascinated by puzzles. I have missed a great deal of enjoyment by not seeing you act until last night.

ACTRESS — Oh, had you never? How did that happen?

COUNT — It's hard for me to go to the theater. I am used to dining late . . . then by the time I can get there, the best part of the play is over. Don't you see?

ACTRESS — From now on, I suppose, you will dine earlier.

COUNT — I've thought of that too. Or maybe I won't dine at all. There is really no pleasure in eating.

ACTRESS — What pleasure is there of any sort for an elderly man, even as well preserved as you are?

COUNT — I often ask that myself. But I am not an old man. There are other reasons why I don't care for certain things.

ACTRESS Do you think so?

COUNT Yes. Louis, for instance, says I am a philosopher. You see he means I am much given to meditating.

ACTRESS Yes . . . Thinking never made anyone happy.

COUNT I have too much time on my hands, that's why. You see, I've often thought it would be better if they would transfer me to Vienna, where there is diversion, excitement. Really, though, it is not much better here than it was over there.

ACTRESS Where is "over there"?

COUNT Down in Hungary, in the holes where I've been stationed most of the time.

ACTRESS What kept you in Hungary?

COUNT The service, as I am telling you.

ACTRESS But why so long in Hungary?

COUNT It just happened that way.

ACTRESS It must be enough to drive one mad.

COUNT — I don't know about that. There is a lot more to do there than here. You know, drilling recruits, breaking in mounts . . . and the country really isn't as bad as they say. The lowlands are really quite beautiful . . . and such sunsets. Too bad I'm no painter. I've often thought if I were, I would paint them. We have a young chap in our regiment, Splany, who could do it. But, dear me, what dull stories I am telling you.

ACTRESS — Please go on; I am enjoying myself royally.

COUNT — I can just talk and talk with you. Louis said the same. It isn't often one can find a good listener.

ACTRESS — Hardly "over there."

COUNT — Or in Vienna either. People are the same everywhere. Where there are more of them, the crowd's just bigger. That's all. Do you really like people?

ACTRESS — Like them? I detest them! I can't bear the sight of them. I never see any one. I'm always alone. Nobody ever comes here.

COUNT — You know, I sort of thought that you were a misanthrope. Artists must often be like that. If one lives on a higher plane . . . Well, you are lucky. You know at least what you live for!

ACTRESS What makes you think so? I haven't the slightest idea what I live for!

COUNT But surely to be famous . . . to be fêted . . .

ACTRESS And you think that's happiness?

COUNT Pardon me. There is no happiness. And it's the same with all that people talk about most . . . For instance, love. Well, there is no such thing.

ACTRESS You are right about that!

COUNT A good time . . . a good drunk . . . we can have that, all right . . . they are definite things. When I am having a good time I know I am having a good time. When I am drunk I know I am drunk. All right. We can be sure of things like that. And when they're over, why, they're just over.

ACTRESS Grandly. Just over.

COUNT But as soon as one—how shall I put it—as soon as one gets away from the present moment, I mean, if one looks ahead or back . . . well, everything is lost. Ahead—darkness. Back—confusion. . . . In a word, one gets all mixed up. Am I right?

ACTRESS Wide-eyed, nods. You seem to have it all down.

COUNT — And, you see, my dear lady, once this is clear, it really doesn't matter whether one lives in Vienna or over there. You see, for instance . . . Where may I put my cap? Yes, thank you . . . What were we talking about?

ACTRESS — About living "over there."

COUNT — Yes, yes. Well, as I said, there isn't much difference whether I spend the evening at the casino or at the club. It's all the same.

ACTRESS — And what's all this to do with love?

COUNT — If a person thinks there is such a thing, he'll always have somebody who'll love him.

ACTRESS — Miss Birken, for instance.

COUNT — I really don't see why you always have to come back to little Birken.

ACTRESS — But she's your mistress, isn't she?

COUNT — Who says so?

ACTRESS — Everybody knows it.

COUNT — Except myself, I would have you observe.

ACTRESS — But you fought a duel on her account!

COUNT — Maybe I was even killed without knowing it.

ACTRESS — Now, Count, you are a man of honor. Won't you sit closer to me?

COUNT — I will take the liberty.

ACTRESS — Over here. She draws him to her, and passes her hand through his hair. I knew you would come to-day.

COUNT — How did you know?

ACTRESS — I knew it last night in the theater.

COUNT — Could you see me from the stage?

ACTRESS — My dear sir! Didn't you notice that I acted for you alone?

COUNT — Surely not?

ACTRESS — I felt I could fly, when I saw you in the first row.

COUNT — Could fly? Because of me? I never even suspected that you noticed me!

ACTRESS — Your aristocratic reserve is enough to drive one to despair.

COUNT — My dear lady . . .

ACTRESS — "My dear lady"! . . . At least, take off your saber!

COUNT — If I may. Takes it off and leans it against the bed.

ACTRESS — And now do give me a kiss.

COUNT — Kisses her. She does not release him.

ACTRESS — It would have been better if I had never seen you.

COUNT — No, it's better this way.

ACTRESS — Count, you are a poseur!

COUNT — I—how?

ACTRESS — Can't you imagine how happy many a man would be if he could be in your place!

COUNT — I am very happy.

ACTRESS — I thought there was no happiness. Why do you look at me that way? I believe I frightened you, Count!

COUNT — I told you, you are a puzzle.

ACTRESS — Oh, don't bother me with your philosophy . . . come closer to me. And ask me for anything at all . . . you can have whatever you want. You are so handsome.

COUNT — Well, then, I ask kissing her hand permission to call again this evening.

ACTRESS This evening . . . but I have to work.

COUNT After the play.

ACTRESS And you ask for nothing else?

COUNT I shall ask for everything else after the play.

ACTRESS Hurt. You can go right on asking, you abominable poseur.

COUNT But, see, we've been perfectly frank with each other so far . . . it seems to me it would be much nicer after the play . . . much cozier than now, when . . . I have a sort of feeling the door might fly open any moment. . . .

ACTRESS It does not open from the outside.

COUNT Well, you see, I have an idea one shouldn't lightly spoil in advance something which may be very beautiful.

ACTRESS Which may be . . .

COUNT To tell the truth, love in the morning seems horrible to me.

ACTRESS Well, you are about the craziest I ever—

COUNT

I am not talking about women in general . . . because in general it doesn't make any difference anyway. But women like you . . . no, you may call me crazy as often as you want to. But women like you . . . one doesn't take them before breakfast. So . . . you know . . . so . . .

ACTRESS

Oh, you are a darling!

COUNT

You understand what I mean, don't you? Now that is what I am looking forward to . . .

ACTRESS

How do you want it to be?

COUNT

Like this . . . I wait for you in a carriage after the play, then we drive somewhere for supper . . .

ACTRESS

I am not Miss Birken.

COUNT

I didn't say you were. Only, it seems to me, one has to be in the right mood for everything. I don't get into the right mood until supper. The best part of it will be when we drive home, and then . . .

ACTRESS

And then?

COUNT

Well, that depends on circumstances.

ACTRESS

Do sit closer. Closer.

COUNT — Sitting down on the bed. It seems to me the pillows are scented . . . Mignonette—isn't it?

ACTRESS — It's very warm in here, don't you think so?

COUNT — Bends down, and kisses her neck.

ACTRESS — Oh, Count, that is contrary to your program.

COUNT — Who said anything about a "program"? I have none.

ACTRESS — Drawing him close to her.

COUNT — It really is very warm.

ACTRESS — Do you think so? And so dark, just as if it were evening. . . . Draws him toward her. It is evening . . . it is night. . . . Close your eyes, if it is too light for you. Come! . . . Come! . . .

COUNT — Offers no further resistance.

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ACTRESS — And what about moods now, you poseur?

COUNT — You are a little devil.

ACTRESS — What a thing to say!

COUNT — Well, then, an angel.

ACTRESS — You should have been an actor. Really! You understand women. And do you know what I am going to do now?

COUNT — What?

ACTRESS — I am going to tell you that I shall never see you again.

COUNT — But why?

ACTRESS — Never, never. You are too dangerous! You drive a woman mad. You stand in front of me, all of a sudden, as if nothing had happened.

COUNT — But . . .

ACTRESS — Please remember, Count, I have just become your mistress.

COUNT — I shall never forget it!

ACTRESS — And what about to-night?

COUNT — What do you mean?

ACTRESS — Well, you wanted to wait for me after the theater?

COUNT — Very well, let's make it to-morrow night.

ACTRESS — What do you mean to-morrow? We were talking about to-night.

COUNT — There wouldn't be much sense in that.

ACTRESS — You—you are getting old!

COUNT — You don't quite understand me. What I am talking about has to do rather—how shall I express myself—rather concerns the soul.

ACTRESS — What do I care about your soul?

COUNT — Believe me, the soul enters into this. I am sure it is erroneous to believe that the spiritual and the physical are separable.

ACTRESS — Don't bother me with your philosophy. If I want any of that, I will read books.

COUNT — One never learns from books.

ACTRESS — Quite true! And that's why you ought to wait for me to-night. We will come to some agreement regarding the soul, you villain!

COUNT — Well, then, if I may, I shall wait in my carriage. . . .

ACTRESS — You shall wait for me here in my home—

COUNT — After the play . . .

ACTRESS — Naturally. Count buckles on his sword.

ACTRESS What are you doing?

COUNT I believe it is time for me to go. For a formal call I have stayed a bit too long as it is.

ACTRESS Well, this evening it shan't be any formal call.

COUNT You think not?

ACTRESS I'll take care of that. And now give me one more kiss, you darling little philosopher. Here, you seducer . . . sweet child, you seller of souls, you . . . skunk. After she has ardently kissed him several times, she thrusts him violently away. Count, you have done me a great honor.

COUNT I kiss your hand, my dear lady. At the door. Au revoir.

ACTRESS Good-by, country-life in Hungary. . . .

CURTAIN

COUNT AND THE STREETWALKER

R.G.

COUNT AND THE STREETWALKER

About six in the morning. A poorly furnished room with one window. Dirty yellow shutters closed. Tattered green curtains. On the dresser several photographs, and beside them a woman's hat, cheap and terrible. Behind the mirror cheap Japanese fans. On the table which has a red cover, is an oil lamp with a shade of yellow paper. The lamp is burning low and makes a disagreeable odor. Beside it a pitcher with a bit of left-over beer, and a half-empty glass. On the floor beside the bed woman's clothes in disorderly heap, as if they had just been hastily flung off. The Girl lies in the bed asleep, breathing quietly. The Count is lying on the sofa fully dressed with his light overcoat on. His hat is on the floor at the head of the sofa.

COUNT

Stirs, rubs his eyes, sits up suddenly, and looks around. Where am I? Oh, yes. So I actually went home with that woman. He rises quickly, notices her bed. Oh, there she is. So it can all happen, even at my age. I haven't the least idea—Did they carry me up here? No. I saw something—come into this room. I was still awake then, or they waked me up or . . . or maybe it's only the room that reminds me of something? Yes . . . just yesterday I saw it. Looks at his watch. What! yesterday, a couple of hours ago!—But, I

knew something had to happen. I felt it in my bones. When I began to drink yesterday, I felt it . . . and what has happened? Nothing. Or did it? 'Pon my soul . . . for . . . for ten years I haven't had anything like this. Well, the long and short of it is that I got good and god damn drunk. If I only knew when I began. I remember perfectly when Louis and I went into the night-club, and . . . no, no. We left together, so it must have been on the way. Yes, that's it, Louis and I were riding in my carriage. But why do I rack my brain about it? It really doesn't matter. Let's see how we get out of here. Rises. The lamp shakes. Oh! Looks at the sleeping girl. She is a good healthy sleeper. I don't remember anything, but I'll put the money on the table and then . . . good-by. If I didn't know what she is! Studies her. I've known a good many who didn't look as virtuous even in their sleep. My word. Louis would say I'm philosophizing again, but it's true, sleep is the great leveler—like its brother death. Hm, I should like to know, whether—No, I'd certainly remember that. No, no, I just passed out on the sofa . . . and nothing happened. It is incredible how much alike all women look. Well, let's go. He is about to go. Oh, of course. He takes his wallet, and is about to take out a banknote.

STREETWALKER — Awakening. Well . . . who's there so early in the morning? Recognizing him. Hello, honey!

COUNT — Good morning. Have a good sleep?

STREETWALKER — Stretching. Oh, come here. Give's a little loving.

COUNT — Bends down to her, considers, and draws back. I was just going. . . .

STREETWALKER — Going?

COUNT — It's really quite time.

STREETWALKER — You want to go away?

COUNT — Slightly embarrasssed. Well. . . .

STREETWALKER — Well, good-by, you'll come some other time.

COUNT — Yes, good-by. But, won't you give me your hand?

STREETWALKER — Reaches out her hand from under the cover.

COUNT — Takes her hand, and kisses it mechanically, and becoming aware of what he is doing, he smiles. Just as if she were a princess. Besides, if one only. . . .

STREETWALKER — Why do you look at me that way?

COUNT — If one sees nothing but the head, as I do now . . . anyway, they all look innocent when they first wake up . . . My word, one might imagine almost anything if there weren't such a stench of kerosene.

STREETWALKER — Yes, the lamp's rotten.

COUNT — How old are you, really?

STREETWALKER — Well, what would you guess?

COUNT — Twenty-four.

STREETWALKER — Like hell, I am!

COUNT — Older?

STREETWALKER — I'm just going on twenty.

COUNT — And how long have you been . . .

STREETWALKER — A year.

COUNT — You began early.

STREETWALKER — Better early than late.

COUNT — Sits down upon her bed. Tell me, are you really happy?

STREETWALKER — Huh?

COUNT — I mean, are you getting along all right?

STREETWALKER — I always get along O. K.

COUNT — I see. . . . Well, did it never occur to you that you might do something else?

STREETWALKER — What else?

COUNT — Well . . . You are a very pretty girl. You might take a lover, for instance.

STREETWALKER — Do you think I haven't got any?

COUNT — Yes, I know. But I mean just one, understand? Just one, who would take care of you, so that you wouldn't have to go with everybody.

STREETWALKER — I don't go with everybody. Thank God, I don't have to. I can pick and choose.

COUNT — Looks around the room.

STREETWALKER — Noticing. We're moving uptown next month.

COUNT — We? Who?

STREETWALKER — Well, the Madam, and a couple of other girls that live here.

COUNT — There are others?

STREETWALKER — Next door . . . don't you hear? . . . that is Milly. She was in the café too.

COUNT — I hear some one snoring.

STREETWALKER — That's Milly. She'll snore all day long, until ten o'clock to-night. Then she'll get up, and go to the café.

COUNT — This is a terrible life.

STREETWALKER — Sure is. And believe me the Madam gives her hell. I'm always on my beat by noon.

COUNT — What do you do on your beat?

STREETWALKER — What do you suppose? I go lookin' for business.

COUNT — Oh, yes . . . of course. . . Rises, takes out his wallet, and puts a banknote on the table. Good-by!

STREETWALKER — Going already? . . . Good-by. . . . Call again soon. Turns on her side.

COUNT — Stands still. Tell me, are you all fed up with everything?

STREETWALKER — Huh?

COUNT — I mean you don't get any fun out of it any more?

STREETWALKER — Yawning. I wanna sleep.

COUNT — It's all the same to you whether a man is young or old or whether he . . .

STREETWALKER — What's it to you?

COUNT — Well . . . Suddenly hitting upon a thought. My word, now I know whom you remind me of . . .

STREETWALKER — Do I look like some baby you know?

COUNT — Incredible, incredible. Now please, don't talk, at least not for a minute. . . . Looking at her. The very same features. Suddenly he kisses her eyes. The very image.

STREETWALKER — What the . . .

COUNT — My word, it's too bad that you . . . aren't something else. You could make your fortune!

STREETWALKER — You gab just like Frank.

COUNT — Who is Frank?

STREETWALKER — The waiter in the café where us girls hang out.

COUNT — In what way am I just like Frank?

STREETWALKER — He is always telling me "You could make your fortune," and wanting me to marry him.

COUNT — Why don't you?

STREETWALKER — No thank you. . . . I don't want to marry, no, not for all the money in the world. Maybe I'll get hooked up when I get older.

COUNT — The eyes . . . the very same eyes. . . . Louis would certainly say I was a fool.—But I must kiss your eyes once more . . . so . . . and now "Good-by."

STREETWALKER — Good-by. . . .

COUNT — At the door. Tell me . . . aren't you a bit surprised?

STREETWALKER — What for?

COUNT — That I don't want anything else.

STREETWALKER — Lots of men don't want it in the morning.

COUNT — I see . . . To himself. Absurd, that I expect her to be surprised. . . . Well, good-by. . . . He is at the door. But really, I'm vexed. I ought to know that women like her care only about money. What am I saying . . . like her? It is fine, anyway, at least, she doesn't pretend; I ought to be glad. . . . Aloud. May I come to see you again very soon?

STREETWALKER — With closed eyes. Sure.

COUNT — When are you at home?

STREETWALKER — I'm always at home. Just ask for Leocadia.

COUNT — Leocadia. . . . All right. Well, good-by. At the door. I can still feel the wine. But after all, this is glorious. I go with a woman like her and do nothing but kiss her eyes, because she has reminded me of some one. . . . Turns toward her. Tell me, Leocadia, does it often happen that a man leaves you in this way?

STREETWALKER — What way?

COUNT — As I am doing.

STREETWALKER — In the morning?

COUNT — No . . . have you ever had any one with you—who didn't want anything from you?

STREETWALKER — No, that has never happened to me.

COUNT — Well, what do you think then? Do you think I didn't like you?

STREETWALKER — Why shouldn't you like me? You sure liked me enough last night.

COUNT — I like you now, too.

STREETWALKER — But you sure liked hot last night.

COUNT — What makes you say so?

STREETWALKER — Why ask such foolish questions?

COUNT — Last night . . . well, tell me, didn't I drop right down on the sofa?

STREETWALKER — Certainly . . . you and me together.

COUNT — Together!

STREETWALKER — Sure, don't you remember?

COUNT — Together . . . I . . .

STREETWALKER — But you passed right out.

COUNT — Right away. . . . So . . . that's what happened? . . .

STREETWALKER — Sure thing, honey. But you must have been awful stewed if you can't remember.

COUNT — So. . . . And yet . . . there is a faint resemblance. . . . Good-by. . . . Listens . . . What is the matter?

STREETWALKER — The house-girl is up. Give her a tip as you go out. The outside door is open, so you won't have to give anything to the janitor.

COUNT — In the anteroom. Well. . . . It would have been beautiful, if I had only kissed her eyes. It would have been almost an adventure. . . . But . . . it wasn't to be. . . . The servant opens the door. Ah—here. . . . Good-night.—

SERVANT — Good morning!

COUNT — Of course . . . good morning . . . Good morning.

CURTAIN

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